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Systematic beneficence







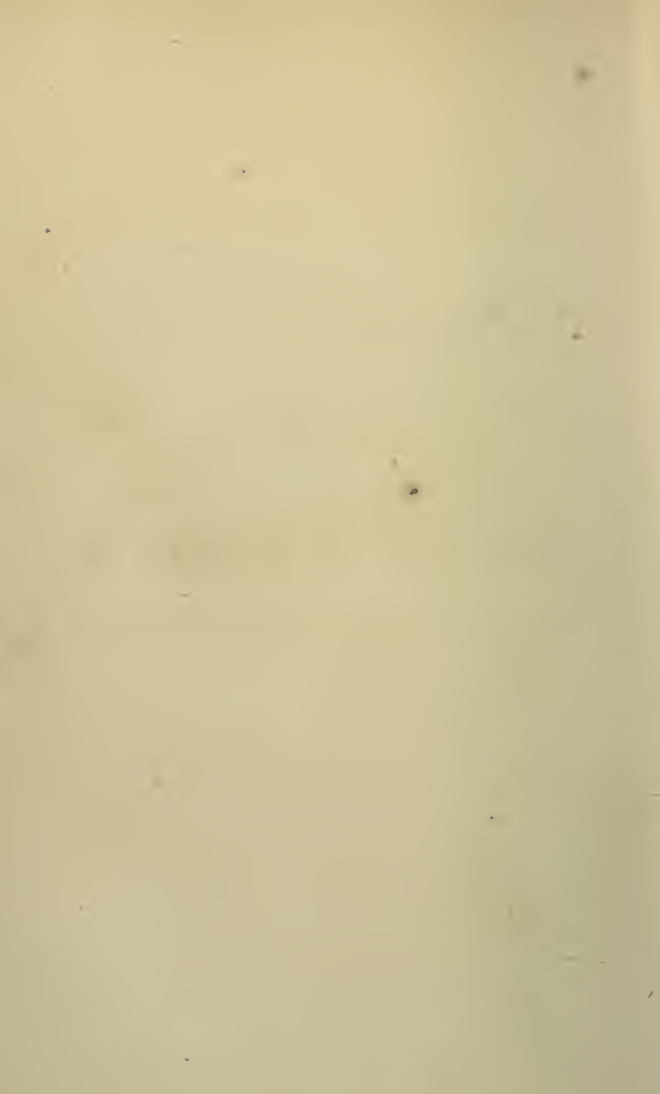




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THE  
G R E A T R E F O R M.

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THE  
G R E A T R E F O R M :

A Prize Essay

ON THE DUTY AND THE BEST METHOD OF SYSTEM-  
ATIC BENEFICENCE IN THE CHURCH.

By ABEL STEVENS.

Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance,  
and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, ~~see~~  
that ye abound in this *grace* also.—2 Cor. viii, 7.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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WHOEVER reads this book thoroughly will understand what is meant by "The Great Reform." It is here clearly defined, and its methods are strikingly indicated. The author bases his conclusions and appeals so directly upon divine revelation that we cannot see how they can be resisted. Certainly, they will not be by a well-instructed and purified conscience.

What minister of the Gospel, what official member, what observing layman, can fail to be aware that some radical defects exist in the financial policy of the Church? How often and how deeply has this been felt when means have been wanted for the relief of the poor, for the support of the Gospel at home, for church extension, for the building up of Sunday schools, for the cause of Christian education, for the distribution of evangelical books and tracts, for the spread of

the Bible, and for the support of missions. Those whose hearts have been interested in these noble efforts for the salvation of dying men, and especially when they have been made officially responsible for the guidance of these great enterprises, have felt the stress of demand when there has been far too little, and sometimes even nothing to pay.

And is this necessary? Is it right? Is it not rather insufferable, since "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof?" On every particle of goods entrusted to our care God has an unquestionable claim for these very purposes. The sons and daughters of the Church are, in large numbers, growing wealthy under the stimulating and economical forces of the very Christianity they are called upon to support; and every individual heart needs the moral effects of the noble exercise of liberality which the Gospel requires. "Reform" in the beneficence of the Church is the demand of the age, and we are happy to sound out the appeal in notes so clear and soul-stirring as those uttered in "The Great Reform."



How can the pastor, who would educate his people in the habits of reliable beneficence, do better than to provide himself with a full and constant supply of one or all of our excellent essays on this subject, and distribute them freely? Should it be entirely a gratuity, to come out of the tenth or greater proportion he himself is to give, would he not be wholly compensated in the enlarged liberality of the people, in the increased promptness and approach to equity in his own support, in the healthy, thriving condition of Church finances, and, most of all, in the quickened piety of which this reform would be at once a condition and a result?

But the minister need not bear this burden alone. His people, with a fair opportunity, will always help him. How can the class-leader do more for God, in the promotion of financial reform in the Church, than to coöperate with the pastor in supplying every member of his class? How can a board of stewards, or of trustees, make so economical and productive an expenditure of a small amount of funds, as to see that

the members of the Church, and of the whole congregation, are thoroughly and constantly supplied? It will be like seed sown upon good ground, to be gathered in an abundant harvest. While we recognize the responsibility as belonging to the pastor to see that the books are furnished, and that the subject is properly discussed from the pulpit and in private conversation, we call with the utmost confidence upon our brethren of every relation to the Church to come to his help, that the reform may be as promptly extended and powerful as the demand is imperative.

As this is a Prize Essay, it is due to the author to state that the sealed envelope, containing his name, gave us also the fact that he declines to receive the prize for his own use, and holds it subject to order for future permanent or other benevolent purposes of the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, under whose auspices the book is sent out.

JESSE T. PECK.

NEW-YORK, *Dec.* 20, 1855.

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# THE G R E A T R E F O R M.

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## PART I.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

WE approach the subject which we are about to discuss with the conviction that its importance cannot easily be exaggerated.

Two coincident tendencies of our times render it one of the most important questions before the Christian world. The first of these is, *that Christianity, throughout Protestant lands at least, is becoming more and more detached from states, and therefore thrown, with its immense interests, upon the voluntary support of its followers* The other is the fact, *that at the same time the opportunities for enterprises of philanthropy and evangelization, at home and abroad, are augmenting beyond all precedent, and therefore calling for greatly in-*

creased fiscal means. These two tendencies have become such determinate facts, that they may indeed be considered laws of our times; and they are inseparably related to all that is progressive in Christianity.

What practical question, then, can be more momentous to the Church, at this hour, than the one now before us—the right mode of meeting its financial wants?

The great enterprises now devolving upon it cannot be prosecuted, any more than war itself, without financial “sinews.” Here indeed is their present most urgent desideratum; and we think we mistake not when we say, that the *next great idea to be brought out, and made prominent in the Church, is its true standard of pecuniary liberality*—the right relation of Christian men to their property.

A change, amounting to a revolution, must come over Christendom in this respect before Christianity can fairly accomplish its mission in our world. And does not the providence of God present the solution of this question as precisely and inevitably the next great duty of the Church? A series of providential dispensations have followed each other, in her modern history, until she has been brought to confront directly



this problem, and here she stands—hesitating, shall we say? No—we trust not hesitating, but preparing to solve it, and to derive from it a new, and, as we believe, a transcendant dispensation of success.

First in these providential dispensations was the Reformation, letting out again the light of the primitive truth upon the world; then came the “Revival Epoch,” under Edwards, Wesley, and Whitefield; then, and almost immediately, ensued the great Aggressive Movement, originating Sunday schools, Bible, Tract, and Missionary Societies, the Temperance Reform, &c.

The Church itself having been thus put into a new posture, and inspired with new energies, the providence of God began the work of preparation for it in the exterior world; and how marvelously has that preparation advanced!

Let us glance at it here but for a moment.

First, the *geographical access* of the Church to the foreign world has become almost universal. Take the map of the globe, and trace its outlines with your finger. You will find that doors for evangelization are open nearly at every important point. China, with more than half the population of the earth, is accessible to all the

efforts that Christendom is willing to make for her. Her provinces, peopled with millions who are generally able to read, and who read but one language, might be inundated with the Scriptures and other religious publications. Meanwhile her internal movements are presenting new and marvelous opportunities to the truth.

Descending southward we come to Siam, where our missionaries already have full access, and even royal protection at the capital.

Turning westward we reach Burmah and Hindoostan, where Christianity, following in the track of European conquest, is invading Asia from the south, and achieving some of its most signal triumphs.

Crossing the Indian Ocean we meet Madagascar, where the truth has had a lodgment for years; and, after trials and martyrdom, such as the modern Church has no where else endured, has even reached the degraded throne of the country.

We pass the Channel of Mozambique and reach Africa, and here a whole continent lies open to our labors—open on the East, the South, the West.

We ascend northward and pass along Europe: almost everywhere presenting obsta-

cles, she almost everywhere presents also opportunities. It will be time enough for us to complain of the former when we have fully availed ourselves of the latter.

We cross the ocean to the New World. All the northern continent may be said to be thrown wide open for every triumph the Church may propose. The field is won and somewhat fortified; and, as if the providence of God would not wait our delays, but would thrust upon us opportunities, the populations of the Old World, of both Europe and Asia, are cast in upon the mighty arena by hundreds of thousands annually, to be evangelized by our Christian agency.

South America, debased as it is by Popery, is more or less open, everywhere, to the labors of missionaries and the circulation of the Scriptures.

Passing thence to the Pacific—to the innumerable islands, and not merely islands, but continents of Oceanica—now the resort of a vast emigration, and soon to form a second “New World”—we find there not only unobstructed doors, everywhere, but already some of the most triumphant victories ever won by our faith.

Such, then, is the geographical access which we now have to the foreign world.

Was it ever equaled? Everywhere does the Macedonian vision stand out on the boundaries of the nations, and beckon us. Not even in the age chosen by God for the introduction of the Christian religion, because of the general sway and peace of the Roman empire, was the whole world more amply thrown open for the march of the Church. *There is now passing over her a day of opportunity such as the history of our fallen race has never before seen.* Apostles themselves, it may be soberly said, saw no such day. What is the providential meaning of these facts? What but that the Church is summoned to labors, and liberality, and victories such as her history has not before recorded.

Not only have we this great access to the nations, but the *Scriptures* have been rendered into most of their languages. We have now about two hundred translations. Out of the nine or ten hundred millions of our world's population, some six hundred millions have the oracles of Revelation in their vernacular. This was the next essential provision: for what would the living agency, entering into these open doors, have done with the masses of reclaimed pagans, without the Scriptures? What else than prepare another edition of

Popery? But now, almost everywhere, the rock is smitten in the desert, and the streams have begun to flow.

Again, while breaches have thus been made in the walls of error all around the world, and the munitions—the Holy Scriptures—have been provided for the conflict, the enemy to be assailed has everywhere been declining in the capacity to resist. *The inherent strength of all the principal false religions of the world is decaying.*

These great false religions are summarily three—Paganism, Mohammedanism, and Popery. Judaism we take not into the account, as it is not numerically formidable, and, having no “local habitation,” presents no local difficulty. The others make up the strength of religious error in our world, and each of them is not only smitten with inherent declension, but that declension is produced by *causes which must, almost inevitably, continue to operate*, independently even of our *direct* Christian efforts; causes social, scientific, commercial, even mechanical, which are impelling forward the world into a new position, where its old religious delusions must become obsolete, whatever new evils may take their place.

Heathenism, for example, as it exists

throughout Asia and Africa and some of the isles of the sea, must give way before the progress of the new light that is everywhere following in the track of commerce and colonization.

The leading forms of heathenism are so identified with errors in science that the advancement of intelligence alone, dissipating the latter, must almost inevitably dissipate the former also. Their history is so fabulous, their cosmogony so mythical, their astronomy so astrological, the whole encyclopedia of their knowledge so mixed up with absurdities, and these absurdities so interwoven with their religion, that both must alike give way before the new merely human light that is now everywhere breaking in upon their darkness.

We cannot conceive of the continued existence of the great systems of Paganism in lands intersected by railroads and telegraph-lines, and penetrated on all sides by those practical ideas and practical enterprises which modern business and modern science are extending over the world.

One fact is conclusive of the fate of Paganism : *it has no longer the power of self-propagation.* We never hear of its extending itself any more. It has made no more

new conquests for generations, and it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that it should. The power of progress, of conquest, is without, and is continually compressing it into closer and feebler quarters.

The same may be said of Mohammedanism. It appeared at first before the nations full of energy ; its early progress forms the most brilliant chapter in history since the fall of Rome ; it won its triumphant way westward from Arabia, through northern Africa, into Spain, and even into Italy ; it triumphed over the Byzantine empire, and penetrated to the very gates of Vienna ; it spread its rapid conquests eastward into the heart of Asia. But its energy is now exhausted ; in the East it gives way before the advances of European enterprise from Southern India ; and in the West it would expire, as a power among the nations, in a day, were it not for the support which is extended to it by Christian states. The Crescent is the device on the banners of Mohammedanism : it is an appropriate emblem of its fate. Sometimes when the sun has risen we see the crescent-moon still lingering in the heavens ; but it pales, and at last disappears amid the effulgence of the day. So pales the Crescent of the great imposture in the advancing light of the age.



Hardly one century can be reasonably assigned to its future history as a state power in the world.

We contend that Popery is beginning to forebode a similar fate; and from its essential incompatibility with the new tendencies of progress, which the providence of God is now evolving in the world, must inevitably decline.

We cannot too carefully watch it, nor too zealously labor for its defeat, for it will yet, for years, be capable of disastrous influence upon the world; but its essential strength is sapped. Its history, as a great agent among the governments of Europe, is closed. Its dotage comes on apace. It is out of harmony with the age, and destiny itself is against it. Our estimates of Popery in the United States have erred egregiously. According to the census of 1850, it has not *one-eleventh* of the number of churches belonging to the Methodists, scarcely more than *one-eighth* of the number of the Baptists, not *one-fourth* the number of the Presbyterians. It has not *one thirty-third* of the whole number reported, while the Methodists have more than *one-third*, and the Baptists nearly *one-fourth*. Its declension in Ireland has been incredible. According to Rev. R. Bickersteth, there were, about



six years ago, upward of five thousand priests in Ireland; last year, as appeared from a return, there were only two thousand three hundred and sixty-six—a loss of more than one-half.\* As a State, in Italy, it could not stand one week were the arms of its foreign protectors withdrawn; the people whose ancestors recognized its head as the vicegerent of God on earth, would now chase him ignominiously from their ruined country.

What is a pope's bull now-a-days? Nothing but a religious epistle to his ecclesiastics against heresy, Bible societies, &c. A few generations ago it was the thunderbolt of Jove, smiting a whole province, or paralyzing an army.

What sovereign would now care for the Pope's excommunication—that terrific mystery at which the knees of kings, a few centuries since, smote together? We never hear of it any more as against rulers; and if it should be revived, it would be a jest in almost any court of the world.

Why? Because the prestige of Popery is gone—irrecoverably gone. The delusions of the dark ages are past; mankind have awakened from that thousand years' sleep, have risen

\* It should be stated, in reference to these and other statistics in this volume, that it was written in 1854.

up, rubbed their eyes, and found they had been dreaming. The courts of Europe recognize the popedom as an historical fact, still lingering, and therefore to be taken account of, in some way or other, in their conservative policy ; but it is no longer a potential fact in any respects among them. The Pope has little or nothing to do with them directly, except it may be to act the puppet in the ceremonial of a coronation. Since the first French revolution (a great curse with a great many blessings) this has been about his significance in the affairs of Europe. The world is outgrowing Popery, and that is the explanation of its late history. It may make efforts to retrieve itself—it may attempt to relate itself to the movements of states, as in the French reaction and in the politics of America—it may, by Jesuitical agencies, insinuate itself into the religious movements of anti-Catholic countries, as in the Tractarianism of Oxford—it may attempt to startle the remains of superstition among the multitudes by new trumpery, as the winking Madonnas, or the coat of Trèyes, or the Immaculate Conception ; but they all ultimately fail, and more than that, they react. Puseyism, as a project for papalizing the Anglican Church, is now a determinate failure. The imposture at Trèves

excited the ridicule of Europe, and turned thousands out of the ranks of Popery. The winking and nodding Madonnas have of late years become standing jokes in the newspapers of Christendom. It is too late in this working day of the world for such nonsense. Men, honest men, will either weep or laugh at it; but they will not respect it. Destiny itself, we repeat, has set in against Popery. It must descend into the abyss of the past—its appropriate grave. Its old follies, like the congenial ones of alchemy, astrology, witchcraft, scholastic metaphysics, cenobitic and anchorite life, must inevitably disappear amid the increasing light of the age, as bats and owls flee before the day. It may make temporary and spasmodic efforts at self-resuscitation, but it cannot succeed. The waves may dash forward upon the strand when the tide is descending; but, as sure as the invincible laws of nature, will they at last go down. Popery attempts to extend itself abroad; it has many foreign missions, and they at times seem to have the energy of life in them; but where do they succeed now as they did two, three, and four hundred years ago? We are all familiar, from our childhood, with a long-legged spider which, when pierced through the center, still

struggles in its extremities, and the severed extremities themselves still for a time move with convulsive life, but at last die. Such is Popery.

Thus, then, do the once mighty systems of error begin to totter throughout the world. The day has come for the moral strength of Christendom to be put forth universally, demonstratively, and we trust finally—put forth on a scale never equaled before; for most deliberately do we repeat, that never, not even in the days of its founders, did an hour so fraught with opportunity and hope strike upon the clock of the world.

But we stop not here.

Coincidentally with these great changes innumerable other advantages have been providentially provided.

A few generations ago navigation and commerce, those great means of access to the foreign world, were almost exclusively in the hands of papal states—Spain, Portugal, the Catholic cities of Italy and Holland; now they are almost as exclusively in the hands of Protestant Christendom. England is mistress of the seas, and in a few years America will be their master.

A few generations since colonization—that great means of extending civilization, in

both ancient and modern times—was almost entirely papal. With the era of the Puritans it began to pass over to Protestantism, and now Saxon Christianity is bearing forward that great banner of progress in almost every part of the world.

The art of printing, borrowing the energy of steam, lends its invaluable aid to the progress of the times. The American Bible Society can now send forth a Bible every minute. Literature, among the greatest, is becoming one of the cheapest of human blessings.

The rapidity of international communication is annihilating distance, and uniting the races of the world; all arts which contribute to the relief and advancement of humanity are receiving an impetus never before known in the history of mankind.

No man, however sober his judgment, can look at these facts without perceiving that the history of the human race is verging fast to a new and unprecedented epoch; that the false religions, the whole *status* of the unenlightened world, surrounded and pressed upon by such resistless agencies, must inevitably be revolutionized.

We have, then, the geographical access; we have the Scriptures, the munitions; we

have many incidental facilities for this final moral campaign of the world. And meanwhile the strength of the foes itself inherently declines. What is next needed besides the spiritual purity of the Church? The *sinews of the war*, we repeat—the right standard of pecuniary liberality. We say, with all deliberation, that we cannot perceive why the mission of Christianity in our world could not proceed right on to its consummation, if this one condition were secured. The great obstruction now laid before its chariot-wheels is Mammon—the last idol of our Christian heathenism.

The Church has long been looking for the Apocalyptic angel who is to bear the Gospel to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” She has looked to every point in the horizon for the blessed sight, but she has looked amiss. She must look to her own altar; there she will find him bound in the golden fetters of her avarice, impatient, but unable to attempt his gracious flight. Let her break his chains; then will he spread his pinions, and she shall see the sublime vision “flying in the midst of heaven, bearing the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth.”

Thus is the subject under review, the great

question of the day for Christianity, though infinitely subordinate, of course, to that spiritual consecration of the Church which is everywhere presupposed in this essay. It has already begun to attract attention, but it is yet too vague; it needs development, precision, demonstration. Several prize volumes have been published upon it; several personal instances—princely ones—of systematic charity have become familiar to the public; and, as examples, will do much to promote the beneficence of the times. But the idea is yet too indefinite to have a distinct impression on the public mind of the Church. It must be more discussed. *It is the idea for the next general discussion of Christian reformers.* And a sublime theme for them is it—ennobled not only by its essential beneficence, but by not a few profound ethical bearings.

Half the energy now expended in wranglings that distract the Christian world and disfigure the Church with sectarian bigotry would be sufficient, if devoted to this great question, to advance Christendom fifty per cent. in a couple of generations, and would come near redeeming the world in a century. The remark is emphatic, but it is uttered in all soberness.

## PART II.

THE PRESENT STANDARD OF BENEFICENCE  
IN THE CHURCH.

STANDING upon the high position which we have assumed in the preceding chapter, and surveying the unprecedented prospects which extend from it in every direction, the question of the practical duty of the Church in such circumstances—of what is and what ought to be done?—comes upon us with a resistless appeal.

Let us then ask ourselves, *What is the actual standard of financial liberality in the Church?*

We can hardly put the question without a startling, and if it were not for the seriousness of the subject it would be a ludicrous sense of the incongruity of the language. Can we indeed say that there is any standard—any definite principle whatever in the Christian beneficence of the age? We are proposing, what?—the overthrow of Popery, of Mohammedanism, of all heathendom—the moral conquest of the world itself. Nay, we



go further ; we propose the redemption of the human race for both worlds ; we are proposing this at confessedly the most opportune and, therefore, the most responsible hour of the world's history. We admit that a financial basis is requisite for this mighty design ; and yet hardly a definite-idea has been recognized respecting the pecuniary duty that lies, in a sense, at the foundation of the whole enterprise.

Let us meet the question honestly ; but in doing so let us acknowledge some late rapid improvements—improvements which indicate that the revolution we have affirmed to be necessary is not improbable. Twenty-five years have effected marvelous changes in this respect. Nearly all the great Protestant philanthropies have been much advanced within that period ; and if we bear in mind that hardly a century has passed since most of our Christian “enterprises” began, the present degree of pecuniary liberality among us is certainly encouraging. Many Christian capitalists, in England and in this country, have come to understand that they are not proprietors, but stewards of their wealth ; and are devoting it, in large sums, to the charities of the times.

If we examine the treasury accounts of

the "Christian enterprises" of the day, we shall find a rapidly-increasing ratio of receipts. A few years ago Rev. Stephen Roszel, of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, wrote to a friend that he "really believed the time would come in which that conference would afford \$1,000 per annum for the missionary cause." The treasurer's report from January to December, 1854, shows \$23,815 92. The estimate of the veteran Roszel is now probably met by some single churches of the conference. Such examples are multiplying everywhere and in all sects.

Still how far short of the necessity of the times and the capacity of the Church is its liberality! It has been said that the aggregate appropriations of American Protestantism, for foreign evangelization, do not exceed the annual expense of a single American ship-of-the-line. Is this fact befitting the strength and opportunities of American Christianity in an age like this? The largest denomination of the land contributes to both its foreign and domestic missions at the rate of only about twenty-five and a half cents for each of its members.\*

\* Methodism may plead some apology, however; it is not a century old. In about eighty-seven years it has

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions has commanded greater success; the members of the Churches patronizing it give at the rate of one dollar each. These are fair indications of the pecuniary liberality of the times. Encouraging as they are in comparison with the past, they almost assume, we repeat, a ludicrous insignificance when we consider the design contemplated—the moral renovation of the world. Would an average of five dollars per member—*four millions per annum*—be an extravagant contribution for the Methodist Episcopal Church to such a design? We think the time will come when even that sum will be deemed a pittance for the purpose.

Let us look more closely at our present standard of liberality, if we may venture to use the phrase.

The Christian beneficence of the times lacks two important elements—the senti-

erected four thousand two hundred and twenty chapels, (not much less than one a week during all its history,) at an expense of \$14,730,571. Its expenses for colleges, academies, parsonages, the renewal as well as the original erection of chapels, &c., have been estimated, for the last quarter of a century, at “very little short of one million of dollars per annum.” This is in addition to the expense of its ministry, missions, &c.

ment of *moral obligation* and *method*. There is, unquestionably, some sentiment of duty associated with our charities, but it is so general as to be almost inappreciable. It has no stronghold on the conscience. We feel that we ought to do something for important benevolent enterprises. He would be pronounced an egregious heretic who should deny it absolutely. But how few of us have ever given Christian liberality a place among our ordinary and acknowledged obligations! How few have defined its extent, or kept its reckoning, or deliberately provided for it *as a duty*!

We give when occasion offers, but how? We hardly know ourselves. An eloquent speech, an anecdote, an example of rivalry, sometimes even a jest, extorts our contribution; and thus much of the whole fiscal scheme of Christianity for the redemption of the world—much of the whole “exchequer” of the “kingdom of God” among men—is based upon mere accidents. Is this not the case? And is it, can it be right? Is it not amazing that the finances of religion have not taken a more *religious* character? Is there not needed here a revolution, as we have said?

One question is decisive of this point:

Who of us ever feels conscience-stricken if he omits this duty? Who ever goes home from an assembly for religious beneficence to spend the night in remorse for not having given enough? Should you, Christian reader, as a business man, underpay an honest debt, your conscience could not rest. No one might know the fact save yourself; but your own knowledge of it would be more terrible to you than the knowledge which all men and angels could have. Here is as real a duty as your business debts. It does not take precedence of them, but it is in its place as essentially a duty. Yet, alas! how few feel the guilt of its violation. Assuredly the Christian world needs new convictions on the subject. While mere impulse is thus the occasion of most of our contributions, the manner of giving them is also mostly casual. Systematic charity is beginning to be a theme of the religious press and of the pulpit—a hopeful sign of the times. But how limited yet is the habit! Here and there you meet a conscientious man who has become convinced that it is not only his duty to give, but that the obligation is so sacred as to require scrupulous attention. He feels that he must render account of it in the “last day,” and he settles the claim by a

methodical adjustment of his liberality to the whole business of his life. How can he well do otherwise when once he has perceived aright the subject? Yet so rare are these examples, that scarcely any man can enumerate twenty-five of them in all his acquaintance.

Such, then, is the existing standard of Christian beneficence, if standard it can be called. We are not aware that we have described it with too little qualification. If any one thinks we have, he will at least admit that we are not far short of the truth.

## PART III.

## WHAT SHOULD THE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE BE?

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CHAPTER I.

IT SHOULD BE FOUNDED IN THE SENTIMENT OF DUTY, AND BE MADE A METHODICAL HABIT.

THE actual standard of Christian beneficence being such, if it is asked what it should be, we reply, Just the reverse of the defects we have described.

First, *it should be made a matter of conscientious duty*; and secondly, *become a practical, a regular habit*; and until the teachers of religion have so taught the people, we cannot expect our religious charities to assume stability and efficiency. Perhaps no point of Christian ethics is more misapprehended, or rather not apprehended at all, than the relation of Christian men to their property. And yet the Scriptures are noticeably express on the subject: they teach, as

we have said, not the proprietorship, but the stewardship of the religious man of property. There prevails a perverse discrimination between the moral responsibility of such talents and that of almost all others—a remarkable fallacy, that has withheld from Christianity nine-tenths of its proper effectiveness in the world.

The parable of the talents only discriminates their degrees; the principle of their moral responsibility is the same; and he that had the least gift, and felt, therefore, that he had the least necessity to be scrupulous, was the one who was cast “into outer darkness, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The man who is endowed with the call and the talents to preach the Gospel, feels that “woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” If he abandons his sacred office to seek wealth, he is regarded by the devout as a sort of an apostate, and held accountable to God for the misapplication of his talents. And so he is; and terrible is his accountability. But be reminded, Christian men of business, that when you entered “the kingdom of God” you also became “priests”—for ye are “kings and priests unto God; ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.”



Your talent is different, but your responsibility for its religious use is the same as his. Like him, you live in the world only to promote the interests of that spiritual kingdom into which you have entered. There is no more obligation on the missionary, in the ends of the earth, to devote his talents to the interests of that kingdom, than there is on you, in your workshop, to devote your humbler talents to the same great end. Woe will be on him if he preach not the Gospel; woe will be on you in like manner if your talents, whatever they may be, are not, with a similar consecration, devoted to its promotion. Have you ever awakened to this truth? It probably strikes you, now that we are stating it, as exceedingly questionable—a rhetorical extravagance rather than a sober logical fact. But be assured that you cannot otherwise interpret your Bible; be assured that death will so interpret it to your awakened conscience, and “the Judge of the quick and dead” will so apply it when the “books shall be opened.”

How different is the prevalent view of the religious uses of property, even among Christian men! How few of them differ in their business habits from the unreclaimed worldlings around them! They are in the sanctuary

on the Sabbath, and, it may be, in their closets of prayer daily; but how few of them carry a well-defined religious purpose into their business life! They share the common and ruinous avidity for wealth. They go on adding house to house and stock to stock. Death comes at last; and, amid their accumulated treasures—accumulated for they hardly know what—they are summoned to their account. And what an account must be given of such a life by men professing to “be not of the world,” to “live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again!”

A dereliction—an appalling dereliction—prevails all through Christendom in this respect. It has been the disaster of the world. The prolonged delay, if not defeat, of the Christian mission has been a fearful mystery to many good men. There have been many causes for it, doubtless; but the chief one, next to the spiritual declension of the Church, the one which now, as we have shown, is the chief obstruction of the Gospel, is that which we are discussing—the almost universal disregard of the Scriptural doctrine of the relation of Christian men to their property. Is it not at once obvious, that if the right idea of this subject were brought out fully in all

the Church, and its fiscal schemes were based upon the sense of duty and settled habits of liberality, the whole face of Christendom and of the world itself would soon be changed?

The position we have thus taken respecting the moral obligation of Christian beneficence, novel as it may appear to some of our readers, is, we think, Scriptural, and in accordance with the sense of the Church in former times. Indeed, the vagueness, both of principle and practice, which now characterizes our Christian liberality, is, we believe, more extreme than at any former period of the Church. As the command to spread the Gospel "into all the world," came to be so indefinitely apprehended as to be almost a nullity throughout Protestant Christendom, until within a few generations, so the Scriptural doctrine of beneficence has lost its distinctness—been nearly generalized away—until recent exigencies of the Church have begun to recall attention to it.

The Middle Ages excelled us altogether in this respect; property was then very generally consecrated to religion. The charities of those dark times were misdirected, and became a public evil; but they were right in their moral principle. They covered Europe with temples and religious houses, and gave

an aspect of piety, however superstitious, to secular possessions and all secular life.

The Levitical dispensation was distinguished in a remarkable manner by the sanctification of property ; and not more by its endless symbolism than by its religious charities was it adapted to the moral education of its people. We err egregiously when we speak of the *tithe*, the one-tenth, as the standard of Jewish contributions to religion. The seal of a religious charity was put upon almost every article of the Jew's possessions. He paid for the ransom of his first-born son ; he paid for the first-fruits of his flocks, and the first gatherings of his harvest, the latter being estimated at a sixtieth. He left in the corners of his fields, for the destitute, another sixtieth. Whatever dropped from his hand in reaping was left for the poor ; and once in every seven years he allowed his lands to produce spontaneously for them. Then there were the sacrificed animals, or portions of them--the trespass-offerings, the sin-offerings, &c. ; the expense of pilgrimages to the temple, thrice in the life of every male ; the half-shekels for the sanctuary, and the remission of all debts every seventh year. Besides these there were numerous expenses for hospitality and reliefs to the poor ; and then

came the tithe—the tenth of the produce of the fields—for the Levites; and, finally, the remainder was assessed for another tenth, to be spent for the worship of the temple and for the poor; and then, at the end of every third year, in order to secure the integrity of the law, the people made solemn declaration before God that this last tenth had been faithfully provided. It has been estimated that the devout Jew gave away about *one-third* of all his income to the poor and to religion. And let it be borne in mind, that so exact and graduated were the Levitical customs in this respect, that these appropriations were not from particular classes of the people, but from all; the ratio being proportioned to their resources. Besides these systematic charities, what special liberality did they show for their religion, as for the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem—the amount expended on the latter being estimated at *three thousand millions of dollars*; a sum that throws into utter eclipse all the expenditure of Protestant Christendom during generations for that greater work of foreign evangelization, to which, as we have shown, all the world is summoning it.

A divine meaning was there in this Jewish

system of beneficence: it had those true elements of effectiveness which we have said are lacking in our modern Christian charities—moral obligation and method. It was no grievance on the Jewish people; few of their institutions had a more salutary effect upon their social system; they thrived under it, and perhaps no nation ever suffered less under that great plague of modern civilization—pauperism—the problem that baffles the legislative wisdom of the age, and almost everywhere obstructs the march of nations.

Though this noble beneficence was connected with the Jewish ecclesiastical system, and is therefore annulled in its detail, yet will any Christian man admit that its essential principles are annulled? that Christianity, especially in this age, when the destinies of the world are devolving upon it, may have a financial standard beneath that of a state which was hardly larger than some of the single counties of this Christian land, and whose whole design was the maintenance of a preliminary if not a local religion?

The primitive Christians did not understand that the abolition of Judaism repealed its essential beneficence. On the contrary, few subjects received more attention in the first consultations and labors of the Church

than its provisions for the poor and for the extension of the Gospel. One of its ministerial orders, still retained,—the deaconate,—was established chiefly for charitable purposes. It had all things in common when circumstances justified it. Its weekly sacrament was followed with distributions to the absent sick and poor. When it sent forth Paul and Barnabas “unto the heathen,” it was with but one specific injunction: “Only they would that we should remember the poor.” Journeys and plans for “collections” for the Churches, are of frequent record in the Epistles and the Acts. One of the apostles asks, “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” Another declares charity to the widow and fatherless to be a part of the definition of religion—“of pure and undefiled” religion; another urges beneficence upon the Church as an exemplification of the principle of the atonement itself—the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” who, “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;” and Christ himself dignified it as the test-virtue of the final judgment.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SCRIPTURAL LAW OF BENEFICENCE.

KEEPING in view, still, the two necessary elements of a right theory of beneficence—*obligation* and *system*—we come now to the *revealed law* on the subject, which, as we shall see, combines both these elements.

We learn from Josephus and Philo, that collections of tithes and other gifts for the temple service at Jerusalem were made regularly in the synagogues on every Sabbath. The Christians at first assembled in the synagogues, not only in Judea, but wherever they could throughout the empire; and their ministerial “orders,” form of “ordination,” and some other rites still extant, were actually copied from the synagogue service. The synagogue charities probably led to St. Paul’s rule of Christian beneficence, as recorded in 1 Cor. xvi, 2:—“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered



him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

The apostle modifies the Jewish custom—the "first day"—the "*Lord's day*"—was substituted for the Jewish Sabbath; and as there was no centralization of Christianity, as of Judaism, at Jerusalem, and no mode of distributing these charities, except by the casual passage of the apostles or leading saints, they were to be kept "in store" till such opportunities occurred. The principle of the synagogue custom was retained, the form only being changed.

This passage we deem to be *the divine rule of Christian beneficence*. It is as specific as the command to spread the Gospel. It is the counterpart of that command, and necessary for its fulfillment; for "how shall they preach except they be sent?" And the indefiniteness of its impression on the Christian mind of our day is, as we have before said, the same as that which, until within a few generations, rendered comparatively powerless the command to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

We are not disposed to be homiletic in this discussion, but we cannot forbear to direct attention to the very specific character of this text. It comprises every point

that could well be suggested as necessary for a complete ordinance on the subject—a law which would admit of no evasion. Look at it:—

First. It seems to have been designed as a *general rule*. As we have stated, it was the general custom of the Jewish Sabbath, only modified enough to suit it to the new circumstances of the new Church. Though prescribed for the Church at Corinth in this instance, yet this does not limit it as a local practice; for the obvious reasons which could render it desirable there would apply anywhere, and many of the most important lessons of revelation, now recognized as unquestionably of general application, are derived from epistles addressed to local Churches. Besides these considerations, the apostle expressly says that he but repeated instructions given elsewhere: “As I have given order to the Churches (not Church) of Galatia, so do ye.”

The inference of its universal applicability is irresistible. What sentiment of Christian sympathy, or motive of usefulness that would render it applicable to Corinth, or to all the Churches of Galatia, would not apply to the Church at Smyrna, or Jerusalem, or Rome—would not apply with even ten-fold

force to all the modern Church, situated, as we have shown, in our introductory chapter, amid redoubled opportunities and necessities? The field of the primitive Church at this time was the Roman empire, though it was soon extended beyond that limit. Our own country alone now equals territorially the Roman dominion; the opportunities for Christian extension, and especially for Christian expenditure, are incalculably greater than they were then; the whole world is open to us in a manner not equaled then; new means of propagating Christianity, and especially requiring funds, (such as the mighty agency of the press,) are at our command; the demands for expenditures within the limits of Christendom itself—for the relief of pauperism, the education of the neglected poor, in Sunday-schools and otherwise, Christian provisions for the aged and sick, &c.—are more pressing now than they were then. How then can we escape the general principle of this great law? All that is new in our circumstances adds to rather than detracts from its force.

Second. The rule is *individual* as well as general. “Let *every one* of you,” &c. The poor as well as the rich were to do something; for the rule was not only designed to

secure funds, but to have a moral effect on the giver himself. And here again all sound logic presses overwhelmingly upon us the modern applicability of this law. God had provided for his people in the desert by miracles; he sent bread even from heaven, and the poor, alike with the rich, were preternaturally supplied. It was a day of perhaps unequalled miracles when this command was given; the apostle who gave it could raise the dead, yet he could not miraculously supersede this duty of the Church by providing for its financial necessities. It was not the will of God that the poor should be thus supplied, or the expenses of the Church thus provided. And why? Because in his infinite wisdom he saw that the moral discipline of his people depended upon their coöperation with himself in such duties. Each one—"every one"—was to have his share in them, that "every one" might have his reward. The whole reason that rendered it unsuitable for miraculous power to supersede the duty, rendered it proper that the duty should be an individual one; and that grand reason applies now, and will apply while the world stands. Not only have we then the precept for the individual duty, but an irresistible argument which

sustains it and renders it universally and permanently appropriate.

Third. It is *methodical*: stated, in regard to time—"upon the first day of the week;" and specific in regard to manner—"lay by him in store." The apostle would evidently guard against that casual habit of liberality which has crept into the Church in modern times, and which, as we have shown, has become the fundamental defect of our religious finances. The words are words of wisdom—of the divine wisdom of Him who knew what we needed on the subject. The usual course of the Scriptures is to reveal, even in their occasional precepts, great principles of duty, leaving to the suggestions of common-sense their particular applications. No very precise method is given here; such a method, while it might suit some, might admit of evasion in others; yet there is enough particularity in the command to show the duty of a well-arranged plan on the part of each. This is further seen in the fact that,—

Fourth. It prescribes a *standard* of liberality quite definite, though flexible enough to meet any circumstances: "As God has prospered him." The poor or unprosperous man is not to be bound to any absolute self-

taxation which might bring suffering upon his family; the rich man is not by any absolute stated donation to assume the right of reserving to himself his other gains, however great. All were alike stewards, not proprietors of their resources, and where much was given much was required. How could a rule for general use be more specific? What rule could be more reasonable? What reason, we ask again, could sustain such a rule in the primitive Church, that does not apply with tenfold force to modern Christians? It is pressed upon us, as has been shown, by innumerable and overwhelming demands, and yet how few among our most liberal men give "as God has prospered them?" Among the ten thousand Christians around you, can you, Christian reader, enumerate a score who do so, or who have ever thought enough of the command to attempt even to estimate what is the proportion between their gifts and the success with which "God has prospered them?" Unquestionably the Church is generally astray from the word of God in this respect; and are we to wonder that her progress in the world is slow, while she errs so egregiously respecting a duty which lies at the very foundation of her great plans?—a duty which is as lit-

erally expressed in the word of God as the law against murder.

Fifth. The apostle seems carefully to discountenance the irregularities, the often questionable expedients with which our modern public collections are made. "That there be no gathering when I come:" "Let all things be done decently, and in order," he has said elsewhere. Our ordinary methods of getting money for the Church, on public occasions at least, will hardly bear the test of this rule; and yet it is doubtful whether we could get it very abundantly otherwise, with the present loose convictions of the Church respecting the duty of its liberality. A stronger proof could hardly be given of the necessity of reviving the apostolic rule of beneficence. Let this have effect, and our charities will not depend upon eloquence, an anecdote, a jest!—they will be as readily and as faithfully appropriated as our expenses for daily household necessities.

Sixth. The rule is *mandatory*; it was *enjoined* in this case as it was *ordered* in the other:—"As I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye." The language is very express, and the logic which sustains it as obvious. We have

abundantly anticipated the latter in the above remarks and the preceding chapter, and need not repeat it here, especially as we wish not, by unnecessary observations, to overlay the clear and striking propositions which a simple analysis of the text brings out.

Such then is this notable passage. Could it be more significant? Now that it is a rigid statute, to be interpreted exactly according to the letter, we do not insist. That would be absurd: but we insist that the generalization of it, by which its essential meaning has been nearly lost in the modern Church, is equally absurd; we insist that it does indicate the essential rule of Christian beneficence, and that it unquestionably implies these three elements as constituents of that rule, viz. :—

First. That Christian beneficence is a matter of *moral obligation*.

Second. That it should be a *determinate habit*.

Third. That it should be a *comprehensive sanctification* of the secular business of the Christian man. He should live to sustain himself and those dependent upon him, only that he and his may be co-workers together with God for the salvation of the world,



laboring for this end in his workshop, in his fields, or in the mart, and applying to it the fruits of his labor as "God prospers him,"—which he cannot do without a method of some kind.

What a revolution of ordinary Christian life would these principles make! We affirm that they are Scriptural, and that their enunciation and demonstration throughout the Christian world are the great want of the times, and must be secured before the Church can avail itself fully of its present great opportunities.

These Scriptural teachings accord fully with the views we have advanced, in our preceding chapter, on the moral obligation of Christian beneficence. While they give the outlines of the "method" which we there advocate, they also present the highest argument, because the highest authority, for the "duty" we asserted; and we have given them separately, because their Scriptural authority and minuteness claim a distinct consideration. In that chapter we said that the responsibility of the Christian preacher—the missionary—to consecrate his talents to the salvation of men, differed not in principle from that which bound the Christian man of business to devote his business talents to

the same purpose, and that the "woe" which should fall upon the former "if he preached not the Gospel," would fall upon the latter if he did not, with his different talent, be also a "co-worker together with God" for the same end. The doctrine is entirely unquestionable. In a hypothetical sense—so vague as to be inappreciable and almost useless—it is readily granted; but when we give it distinct shape, and bring it home to the individual man, how hard is its admission! How is it outrightly contradicted by the practice of the Christian world! Yet we insist upon it, not only as a general truth, but in the detail of its application. What! if a Christian capitalist has ten or twenty thousand dollars income above the wants of his family or his business, would you have him appropriate it all to benevolence? Yes, or fifty, or a hundred, or ten hundred thousand! just as much so as the poor man with his fifty, or a hundred, or ten hundred cents. If Luther or Wesley had deserted the Christian ministry for selfish ends, the "woe" upon them in the "last day" would be proportionate to their great talents and opportunities. The vast responsibility of the failure of the Reformation or of Methodism would devolve upon one or the other of them for-

ever. The responsibility of the talents of the Christian business-man is, we repeat, the same in principle. It is a tacit but disastrous sophistry which has led the Christian world to suppose otherwise. Stephen Girard and John Jacob Astor held their great property or business talents under the same moral responsibility which applied to those great men of the Church. That responsibility will confront them at the bar of their God. There will be no evasion of it there, though it might never have been thought of here. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?" asked the incarnate God himself! And "his disciples were astonished at his doctrine," says the narrative. It is equally astonishing in these days, when brought out thus into distinct contemplation.

But why should it be so *hard* for a rich man to be saved? Why, but that riches, having this responsibility, are nevertheless beset with such peculiar temptations to forget it? We might "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, who, when we fail" on earth, "shall receive us into everlasting habitations;" wealth is indeed enviable in view of its capacities for usefulness; it may scatter benedictions all along

our pilgrimage through life ; it may bring the blessings of those who are ready to perish upon our dying hours, or their welcomes at the gate of heaven. But alas ! a rich man shall “hardly enter into” that heaven ; such is the perversion of the moral sense of even us Christians in respect to this noble yet perilous responsibility. Let him that has it upon his hands bethink himself. Let him beware of robbing his brother and his God. Let him be reminded that he is but a *steward* ; that the day comes on fast when it shall be said unto him, “Give account of thy stewardship !” and that then he shall be judged by that revealed word which we have been examining, and of which not “one jot or tittle” shall fail.

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### CHAPTER III.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE METHOD ?—EXAMPLES.

WE have thus far shown that beneficence should be regarded by the Christian as a *duty*, and should be pursued *methodically*. But what method do we recommend ?

In the preceding chapter we have given the Scriptural outlines which are essential to any plan of the kind, but they are only outlines. It would of course be impossible to prescribe any rule which would be applicable, in every particular, to every case. Nor is this of much importance. Once make charity a matter of conscientious duty, and it will not be difficult for a conscientious man to form his own plan, for plan we insist he should have. The following, however, seems to be a correct course, namely:—

1. Define well what is requisite for the current support and education of your family, and the proper increase of your business—determining *not to go beyond a certain point* in the latter respect.

2. While advancing toward the maximum of your capital, give away annually *a certain per centage* of your income.

3. When you reach the maximum, *give away all your income*, except what is requisite for the temperate expenses of your family.

This plan has been followed by numbers of persons whose examples have been recorded. The case of N. R. Cobb, Esq., a Baptist merchant of Boston, is well known. He resolved to give, from the beginning, *one-fourth*

of his net profits; to give *one-half* when his capital reached twenty thousand dollars; *three-quarters* when it reached thirty thousand dollars; and *all* the profits when it amounted to fifty thousand dollars. He retained his generous resolution till his death, when he had already reached the maximum, and had scattered the blessings of his liberality in every direction. He distributed the profits of his business with the increasing ratio, from year to year, till he had reached the point which he had fixed as the limit of his property, and then he gave to *the cause of God all that he earned*. At one time finding that his property had increased beyond fifty thousand dollars, he immediately devoted the surplus (seven thousand five hundred dollars) as a foundation for a professorship in the Newton Theological Institution, to which he gave, during his life, at least twice that sum. So scrupulous was he in his adherence to the covenant which he had made, that when peculiar circumstances required him to retain in his possession more than fifty thousand dollars, he consulted judicious friends whether he might do so consistently with the spirit of his pledge, provided he always held the surplus as really belonging to the cause of God. Here is the

secret of that wonderful liberality which cheered so many hearts, and gave vigor to so many institutions and plans of benevolence. It sprung from steady religious principles ; it was the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He always felt that God had bestowed on him a rich blessing in enabling him to serve his cause. On his death-bed he said to a friend, in allusion to the rules quoted above, "By the grace of God—*nothing else*—by the grace of God, I have been enabled, under the influence of those resolutions, to give away more than forty thousand dollars. How good the Lord has been to me!"\*

John Wesley remarked in early life, that he had known but four men who had not declined in religion by becoming wealthy ; later in life he corrected the remark, and made no exception. He himself, therefore, guarded scrupulously against the danger. When his own income was but £30 a year he gave away £2 ; when it was £60 he still

\* The following is Mr. Cobb's record of his resolution : "By the grace of God I will never be worth more than \$50,000. By the grace of God I will give one-fourth of the profits of my business to charitable and religious uses. If ever I am worth \$20,000, I will give one-half of my net profits ; and if ever I am worth \$30,000, I will give three-fourths ; and the whole, after \$50,000. So help me God, or give to a more faithful steward, and set me aside."

confined his expenses to £28, and gave away £32; when it reached £120 he kept himself to his old allowance, and gave away £92. Besides giving himself wholly to the public good, and laboring as devotedly as any other man of modern times for the moral welfare of the poor, he gave away, it is computed, a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the proceeds of his publications, &c. The last insertion in his private journal, written with a trembling hand, reads thus: "For upward of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly. I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can and give all I can; that is, all I have."—*J. Wesley, July 16, 1790.*

Dr. Watts gave away one-fifth of his income; Baxter, Doddridge, Dr. Hammond, and Lord Chief Justice Hale, one-tenth. Baxter says that he gave for years this amount, but at last found it too little. He expresses the opinion, however, "that it is as likely a proportion as can be prescribed, and that devoting a tenth part ordinarily to God is a matter that we have more than a human direction for." Doddridge, referring to the subject, says, "I made a solemn dedication of one-tenth of my estate, salary, and income to charitable uses; and I also devote



to such uses an eighth of everything I receive by way of gift or present."

In a late publication, a case is mentioned which is not the less noble for being humble. It says: "Meeting with a pious young mechanic who had lately read the 'Memoir of Normand Smith,' he spoke to this effect: 'Several years I have given about one-fourth of the profits of my calling to charitable purposes, and have merely saved enough to keep my little family above want, should I be called away by death; and so soon as I reach that point, instead of giving one-fourth I will give all my profits, and thus follow Normand Smith, as he followed Christ; for I fully accord with the sentiment expressed in his memoir.'"

This is an example for the mechanic and the poor. The passage in Mr. Smith's memoirs, referred to, is so pertinent that we cannot forbear quoting it:—

"In regard to pursuing business with the view of getting property to be used for the Lord, a volume ought to be written on this subject. Christian men of business do by no means feel its importance as they ought. At a time like this, when funds are so much needed to send the Gospel through the world, I see not why young men of enterprise and

piety may not and ought not to devote themselves to business for the sole purpose of accumulating means to carry forward the benevolent operations of the day. There are some who now act on this principle. The number ought to be greatly increased. There ought to be missionary tradesmen and merchants, just as much as missionary schoolmasters and preachers—men prosecuting business for the great purpose of getting to give into the treasury of the Lord. Nor can there be a doubt that all who should act on this principle would lay up, both for themselves and their families, not only a *good*, but the *best* foundation for a time of need. It has been thought by some that Mr. Smith went beyond the demands of Christian duty in giving so large a portion of his property to benevolent purposes. Of this he was certainly the rightful judge. Having made what he deemed a competent provision for his wife and children, he felt that what remained was the Lord's, and to him he gave it; and though the selfish may wonder, and the wealthy deem it injudicious, the unrolled records of eternity, I cannot doubt, will show that he acted with the soundest Christian discretion—that he did what was best for his family, as well as what was right and

pleasing to his divine Lord. His fatherless children have a better portion than of silver and gold; and their prospects of happiness, here and hereafter, are far greater than if they had been left heirs each to an estate of tens of thousands."

A distinguished civilian says: "I have for many years adopted the rule of setting aside a portion of income 'as the Lord hath prospered me.' I have felt that more than a tenth was my duty, and I can testify to the blessed influence of the system. It enables us the better to discriminate between the various objects—to discover how far we have denied ourselves for Christ and a perishing world; and benevolence thus becomes interwoven with our Christian principles, our high and Christian duties."

An influential citizen says, the system of "laying by in store on the first day of the week, as God has blessed us, I have practiced for several years, and found a blessing in it. It is God's own plan, and therefore better than any other. So every one will find who will but try it. It increases our charity-fund many fold, without our perceiving any diminution of capital or income; and the fund thus set apart being consecrated to the Lord, we are able to distribute

it without grudging, and with a more unbiased judgment, as occasion arises. I am one of the witnesses for God, that in this matter, as in all others, he is good."

The Levites, while they lived on the tithes of the people, were not exempt from the duty of giving also; they gave the tithe of their tithes. (Num. xviii, 26.) The cases we are detailing are applicable to clergymen as well as secular men. And when we consider the influence of their example, the duty becomes inestimably important.

An eminent clergyman says: "I have for many years had a fixed system of devoting from one-fifth to a quarter of my income to religious and charitable uses. I have laid out my plan at the beginning of each year, keeping a private account of all donations, and leaving nothing to mere accident or excited feeling at the moment. At the end of about thirty years, during which I have carried on this system, I find my property materially increased; and I am surprised to find, on looking over my accounts, how many hundreds of dollars I have thus been permitted to contribute to the cause of benevolence."

A prosperous merchant says: "I have myself acted on this principle for many

years; and have some faith to believe that spreading before the people the great principle of systematic giving, is to be a mighty instrument in the hands of God for the conversion of the world."

We have thus defined, perhaps as minutely as is desirable, the outlines of a right method, and exemplified it by instances from actual life—the best possible proofs. The duty we have been expounding is not then a mere hypothesis—apparently reasonable on paper, but inapplicable amid the details and uncertainties of business life. Far otherwise: it extended through all the business relations of the Jewish commonwealth; it is now in actual operation in the counting-houses of successful merchants, who derive from it not merely a large means of usefulness, but new guarantees of safety and success in their pursuits, and the inexpressible enjoyments of habitual charity combined with more elevated business aims and more hopeful business prospects—the counting-house itself being converted into a religious sanctuary, and the usually sordid walks of gain made pathways heavenward. Just here, then, Christian business man, would we have you arrest your attention from any diversion from the subject, and, obeying the

dictates alike of your conscience and your reason, and, we hope also, of your generous heart, bring yourself to the grand, the final determination which shall ennoble your whole life, by "turning many to righteousness," and make your eternity to "shine as the brightness of the firmament," and "as the stars forever and ever." And heeding thus the lesson of this chapter, allow us, before you lay down the book, to urge upon your attention a few more specific counsels on the subject.



## CHAPTER IV.

### FURTHER SUGGESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT.

WHAT has been thus practicable to the few men we have mentioned, is practicable, in some modified form, to *all* Christian business men. And what would be the result if these examples were extended into a universal habit of the Church? An archangel might well rejoice to tell!

There is probably no Christian man now reading these lines who does not see at once the propriety, the sublimity even, of a

life thus regulated and thus consecrated; yet, alas! how many will close our volume without claiming for themselves this blessedness! The difficulty is in beginning so novel a course, for when once begun, it is seldom or never abandoned; the sense of its obligation and blessedness grows with its growth. Would you, Christian reader, begin it? If so, accept a few words of counsel precisely at this point—the point in your life which, perhaps, next to the hour of your conversion, will be gratefully recollected among the reminiscences of your eternity.

First. By the aid of that gracious Spirit that now inspires the desire, resolve that it shall at once become the rule of your life. You see its propriety—you know you should so live—waver not then, prevaricate not with your own conscience. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” “Believest thou this?” then put your property, your business, on the altar of such a consecration. You know the temptations to worldliness, and even to avarice, which you suffer from the present manner of conducting your business;

perhaps they have already a perilous hold upon you ; unless counteracted by a decisive resolution, they may at last "drown your soul in perdition." Decide then to escape, and decide *now*.

Second. Having made the resolution, *bow down before God and consecrate it with prayer*. Review it, and its many consequences, on your knees before Him with whom you have to do. Be not in haste there, for this is a question of life-long interest to you and yours ; repent there of the remissness of the past ; supplicate there the sanctification of your heart from the selfishness that would oppose your new purpose ; be sure that what you now do is done by the grace and for the glory of Him who, "though he was rich, yet for yoursakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Third. Take, then, pen and paper, and *sketch out and sign with your name some definite plan*, something like that which we have stated, and which was adopted by the devoted Cobb. Let it be indefinite in no point where you can be exact ; leave yourself no temptation to evade it in the future.

Fourth. Having gone thus far, *proceed at once, if possible, to give it some practical effect*. "Go forth from before the Lord" to



do some good in his name. Go and place an offering on his altar, give a donation to his poor, or to some of the charities of his Church. Do it at once, however small the offering may necessarily be. Thus far you have been strangling your foe—your evil selfishness—give it now a blow that shall strike it down at once. This is to be a memorable day in your religious history; crown it, then, with some noble, some befitting deed. You will thus find yourself not only resolving to enter upon a high path of life, but already walking in it.

Fifth. As soon as may be, take *a scrupulous account of your business, that you may adjust your charities to it, and ever after endeavor to keep your accounts in such manner that you will be able to keep to your plan of giving.* This will be “keeping your books” for the great account of the judgment.

Sixth. Having thus fully adopted the right course, be sure to *maintain it in the right spirit.* By *faith* alone in Him who gave himself for you, can you yet be saved; by faith alone can even this consecration of your secular life be made salutary to yourself. But though you cannot be saved by your works, still remember that you shall be

judged by them. They are not the cause, but the evidence of your salvation. Rejoice not in them; but yet rejoice, yes, and with an unutterable joy, that you can see in them the evidences of the grace which your heavenly Father has imparted to your soul, and by which alone the desire and the strength for such a consecration have been given you. In this respect a good man may have joy of his steps, for they are directed of the Lord. This joy is now yours; take it and be thankful.

And now, walking from day to day in this better path, in how many respects life becomes new to you! How its sordid cares are sanctified and relieved by a holy use! You live and toil now for some purpose—a purpose that links your lowliest efforts with the great plan of the divine mercy. You find at your command the means of constant well-doing. You can bless the widow and the fatherless. You can scatter among the poor, among those who are ready to perish, and even to the ends of the world, by the ambassadors of your Lord, blessings however humble. And, above all, you have in your life the daily proofs that God abides with you, “working in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure!” Soon will you

find that it is a privilege thus to live ; and in that hour when the true import of life is unveiled to the departing soul, you will feel that, by the grace of God, you have not lived in vain. In that inevitable hour, such a consciousness will be worth all the treasures of the universe ! Be assured, O be assured—seize on and hold fast through life the assurance—that the grace of God, if it is now determining your hesitating resolution, is crowning you with one of its greatest blessings—is vouchsafing to your future life, so long as you are faithful to your vows, one of its most comfortable proofs of your acceptance with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Can you then hesitate ?

## PART IV.

WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULTS, WERE  
THE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN BENEF-  
ICENCE WHAT IT SHOULD BE?

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## CHAPTER I.

## PUBLIC ADVANTAGES.

THUS far we have seen *what is the actual standard of beneficence in the Church, and what it should be*. Let us now briefly glance at *what would be some of the results, public and personal, were it what it should be*. Among the former may be enumerated the following :—

First. It would *secure a more equal distribution of the pecuniary burdens of the Church*. By the present casual way of giving, a comparatively few liberal men sustain most of our religious charities. Exact statistics illustrating this fact would, we doubt not, astonish the Church; but without such statistics the general fact is unquestionable. They have been ascer

tained, so far as we know, in but one instance. A late address of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, to the ministers, Churches, and the people under their care, on the subject of systematic benevolence, says:—

“The total number of Churches reported was two thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine.

“The total number of Churches reported as having contributed to the Board of Domestic Missions, was one thousand three hundred and twenty-two, being one hundred and twelve less than one-half the whole number of Churches.

“The number reported as having contributed to the Board of Foreign Missions was one thousand and sixty-four, being three hundred and seventy-one less than half, and one hundred and four over one-third the total number of Churches.

“To the Board of Education seven hundred and forty-nine Churches contributed, being thirty more than one-fourth of the whole.

“And four hundred and forty Churches made contributions to the Board of Publication, being thirty-nine less than one-sixth of the whole number.

Such is the inequality in this respect, between individual Churches, in one of the most enlightened and competent denominations of the country ; it is doubtless much greater between the individual members of the contributing Churches themselves.

Those who afford the chief support of missions, it will be found, also support mostly the domestic expenses of the Church, and give most liberally to the poor ; and the missionary statistics of the Methodist Episcopal Church show the most surprising inequalities, the contributions in different conferences range from fifty cents to two cents and two mills per member, some of the more wealthy conferences giving the lowest average sums.

Doubtless a very large proportion of Church-members live in almost total neglect of the great duty we have been discussing, thus sinning against their own souls, impairing the energy of the Church, and burdening the comparatively few who are faithful. But upon the system we advocate there would be no necessity for this. Every member of the Church, young and old, rich and poor, could have the means in store to meet their proportion of each

benevolent enterprise in its turn. All would do their part, and all share the blessing.

Second. *It would immensely augment the resources of the Church.* We use a strong phrase, but use it soberly. All ought to give proportionately to the comparatively few who now give all. What would then be the growth of our charities? All who do already give, ought to give proportionately to those who give most. What a revolution would this alone make! What a revolution would it make in all the finances of the Church! Such a result would be inevitable on the principle of systematic benevolence which we have advocated.

The average missionary contributions of the Methodist Episcopal Church per member, for 1854, were twenty-nine cents two mills; while those of the Wesleyan Methodists, England, for the same year, were about one dollar twenty-nine cents per member, more than four times as much as ours; and yet they are in general a poorer people, and have all their other ecclesiastical expenses on a more extensive scale than are ours. Our brethren in Ireland, in the midst of their heroic struggles for the support of the

cause at home, gave for the year mentioned an average of one dollar forty cents per member for missions. Why all this difference? They have been trained to more thorough habits of liberality than we. What then must be the result, if such a habit of conscientious and systematic liberality as we have proposed were generally adopted? Our missionary receipts for last year hardly exceeded half a cent a week for each member! One cent a week would have afforded \$376,000; two cents a week, \$752,000; five cents a week, \$1,880,000. Let us not stagger at such calculations. They but approximate what we must yet realize if we would save the world! Does any sober-minded reader doubt that the principles we have advocated would secure for missions (besides our other present expenses) an average of five dollars per member per annum? The grand aggregate of \$3,763,000 would then be yearly cast into the scale of the world's moral destiny by the bond of our single Church! A result which (such, alas! is our present stinted benevolence) most readers will contemplate with a smile of incredulous astonishment. Spread abroad in the Church legitimate views of its duty, and the time will come



when even this sublime calculation will be no longer a marvel.\*

Third. It would afford *more reliable calculations for our philanthropic plans*—a consideration of no small importance, as all who are officially charged with such plans well know. Economy in the use of means, well-directed application of them, the largest results from them, depend much upon the forecast of those who manage them. Our religious philanthropies are becoming matters of such importance that, like the expenditures of states, they need

\* Dr. Anderson of the American Board has ascertained a curious fact, which shows with how little of conscientious principle religious contributions are usually given. His figures prove conclusively, that the amount subscribed generally is by no means regulated by the exactability of the subscribers. Subscriptions are in *convenient* sums—in sums which constitute a kind of unit in our currency. Thus there are three hundred and thirteen subscriptions of ten cents, four hundred and forty-eight of twelve and a half cents, only one hundred and seventy-three between this and twenty-five cents, but two thousand three hundred and forty-three of twenty-five cents. There are only one hundred and thirty-three between twenty-five cents and thirty cents, but two thousand and eighty-eight of fifty cents, one hundred and seventy-seven all the way between fifty cents and a dollar. From one dollar the general rule is to go to two, from two to three, and so on to ten. These facts are suggestive to collectors and agents.

the most deliberate calculation. They extend to all parts of the globe, they look to the most important results, and yet by our own present standard of liberality they must be stinted and embarrassed by uncontrollable liabilities.

Fourth. It would tend to *develop all the other energies of the Church*. God has made his cause in the world dependent upon our coöperation with him in this respect as in others. His infinite wisdom has seen it best that it should be so, and our limited wisdom cannot but see it thus also. In proportion as his Church is active and liberal in any one direction, does its prosperity extend in all others. The reflex effect of foreign missions is so remarkable and so well known, as to be a recognized law. Such a fact as a Church active with the missionary spirit, and otherwise spiritually dead, is now inconceivable ; such a fact as a Church conscientiously and systematically consecrating its money to the cause of God, and yet not consecrated itself to him in all its interests, would be alike inconceivable. By the systematic liberality for which we plead, all the instrumentalities of religion would be indefinitely advanced ; Churches would be multiplied, Sunday-

schools increased, City Missions and colportage extended; Bibles, Tracts, and other religious publications scattered on a scale which we would hardly dare now to predict, could we even conceive it. The ministry, better supported, would be more fully replenished; debts would not hang like dead weights upon our Churches; our institutions of education would no longer languish for support; the Church, in fine, would show, in its every movement, the mighty energy of its new revolution.

Fifth. With such renovation at home, and increased efforts abroad, how soon would it *put the whole moral world in a state of siege?* Turn again to our introductory chapter; it was far from irrelevant, though not on the particular topic of this essay: meditate again the prospect of the world as there viewed, and then suppose the financial revolution in the Church which we have discussed to be in full effect. Would you not, Christian parent, in descending to your grave, commit to your children the hope of the immediate salvation of the world? The most formidable barriers, as we have shown, are thrown down, and the world is opening for the march of the Church; the difficulty is no longer without, it is

within. She has but to put forth her strength and conquer.

Sixth. Such a reform, with its sublime consequences, would *tend much to stop the mouths of scoffers*. There is too much reason yet for the reproaches which the Church suffers from the world; Christian men are not enough distinguished from worldings on 'Change, in the mart, and in the self-indulgences of life. Whatever their pretensions may be in the pew, the vestry meeting, or the closet, they too generally grasp at the world, like men who profess only to be of it. Confirmed avarice is not unfrequently seated prominently, sometimes officially, in the Church. There are men bearing the name of Christ in nearly all denominations; men of competence if not of wealth, who, beyond the expense of their own accommodation in the Church, give nothing whatever for the great and struggling interests of religion in the world. Poverty knocks in vain at their doors; the widow and the fatherless perish in their vicinity unheeded, or it may be unknown. The faithful few who go forth to gather into Sunday schools or city missions the thousands of neglected children or out-cast men and women, look in vain to them for aid. "How dwelleth the love of God"

in such men? What are they but practical libels on the Church; and their lives, but practical jests at the moral wretchedness of the world? What defense have we against the scorn of godless men at such examples? Assuredly new light, new convictions on the the right use of property by Christian men, are needed throughout the Church; and until they prevail in such manner that a covetous man shall find the floor of the sanctuary burn beneath his feet, and its altars everywhere pronouncing him an *anathema mar-anatha*, the scorn of the world will not cease against us.

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## CHAPTER II.

### PERSONAL ADVANTAGES.

AND now, having shown the importance of the subject, defined its obligation and method, and enumerated some of its public advantages, let us bring the great question more directly home to our hearts by considering its more personal motives. We have anticipated a few of these, having found it opportune to urge them at the conclusion of

some of our arguments; but "line upon line and precept upon precept" would not be irrelevant in a plea like this.

First. One of the most important *personal* advantages of the course we have recommended, would be its tendency *to elevate our ordinary secular life*. What is life—what is the solution of the problem of life? is the worse than idle question uttered often by the philosopher as well as the sentimentalist. Life is not a problem, much less an illusion, as many have profanely dreamed. It is, with the lowliest of us, a mighty and an obvious reality, full of meaning, and, if we will, full of hope and full of moral glory. It is a probation through which, by the discipline of duties and sufferings, the grace of our heavenly Father would conduct us to destinies of endless felicity. The subtilities of the philosopher and the ideals of the poet on the subject are but reveries: he only solves the problem, whether in the palace or the hovel, who fully avails himself of his opportunities by "doing the duty nearest to him," and seizing upon all others as they come in their turns; and he also is the man that stands exempt, in the consciousness, healthfulness, and wisdom of his existence, from the mystical or rather the morbid anxieties of life that

render it so dark a problem to many who sicken under its irksomeness, even while enriched with its best opportunities.

But what is life as exemplified by most of the world? What but a moral insanity, in which its means are ravenously pursued with almost total forgetfulness of its ends? If an angel should light upon this planet, previously unaware of the conditions of life here, what would be his astonishment at the spectacle! He would see a race having the noblest intellectual and moral capacities, pursuing, with only here and there an exception, a course that has in it no moral dignity, no moral import whatever—rushing to the precipice of death, but on the way thither busied only in grasping at bubbles in the air—the intellect cultivated mostly for the short-lived advantages of gain or ambition; the claims of morality enforced by the bayonet, prisons, the gallows, mostly for the facilities which public order affords to the pursuits of individual selfishness, or at least worldliness—the great men of the earth, at the head of the nations, usually the most forgetful of the divine sovereignty which is over them, and which will hold them to a terrible account—the lowlier masses mostly self-abandoned to the indulgence of their mere instincts.

Meanwhile divine truth lifts up its voice amid the general delirium almost in vain. Providential chastisements—pestilence, war, famine, revolutions—incessantly warn and strike the maddened millions, but reclaim, alas! how few. The celestial visitor might fain spread his wings in dismay, and seek in other worlds to forget the astonishing sight. Generation after generation thus passes away, each individual man (with the exception of the comparatively few who are “wise unto salvation”) finding only at death that his life has been a dream—or worse, a very madness.

The philosopher and the poet—sick at heart with the amazing spectacle, and yet godless themselves—turn away from it to melancholy meditations on the “mystery of life”—the appalling incongruity of the scene. It is not a mystery, we repeat; God has not so ordained it. Its “problem,” so called, is a great practical sophism which has overspread and overthrown the world, but the refutation of which is ceaselessly uttered by the united voices of nature, reason, and revelation. The cause is obvious—the remedy is equally obvious. Let men but betake themselves to the Bible, they will there—the most simple-minded of them—



learn the true significance of life as a probation; let them adopt its precepts of duty, (intelligible to all,) and consistency and dignity immediately crown their lowliest spheres of toil or suffering; let them universally do so, and the whole appalling spectacle would be changed. Life, in its humblest duties and trials, and also its severest catastrophes, would become relieved, and even beautified, by offices of mutual charity, by its moral significance, and by the speedy extinction of its worst deformities.

This general spectacle of the world is made up of individual examples. On the one hand we see the demagogue sacrificing ease and conscience itself in the struggle for power, not through patriotism but selfishness. Does he reach it? His life is then crowded with anxieties, and rancor, and cares, and above all with self-accusations for its self-prostitution; he sinks into the grave at last, and all is lost except a temporary notoriety, now totally unavailable to him amid the solemn destiny to which he has gone, but which he recklessly neglected. On the other hand, we see the money-maker spending his days in the restless struggle of business—the hazards of speculations, competitions, circumventions. The ingenious,

but not the less guilty frauds of trade—what havoc do they make of the peace of the heart and the moral designs of life? He succeeds, he has got even all the resources which can possibly minister to the real enjoyment of existence; does he now relax his endeavors? does he bethink himself of what even reason or nature, independently of revelation, would dictate to him as an appropriate life? No; the delirium is still upon him; he adds acre to acre, stock to stock; the accumulation may become so great as to be a scarcely manageable burden, and obviously beyond what can ever be applied to the real purposes of his life, and still he struggles on and on; often, even in advanced life, he will deny himself the very ends of wealth in his insane desire to accumulate its means. At last comes an event that he, in his eager avarice, scarcely ever anticipated as possible to himself. Death confronts him: he is surprised as from a dream, and “fear comes upon him, and trembling which maketh all his bones to shake.” With him too now all is lost! His last view of life is to see that it is a failure. In his blind selfishness he has, down to this hour, lost sight of its legitimate purposes. He leaves his accumulated treasures, perhaps to ruin his

children, as they have ruined himself, and passes away, a waif upon that tide which waits for no man, but bears onward alike its freights and its wrecks forever. Such is the ordinary life of men. But, men of God! this is not the true life—this is utter folly—this is moral insanity—contradicted, cried out against by all the voices of truth. *You* cannot so live; you are here to prepare for a higher world, and all your pursuits are a denial of your faith in so far as they tend not thither.

And now, giving your ordinary life this nobler tendency, by the consecration of your business in the manner we have described, how does it come forth redeemed from the sordid, demoniacal madness we have contemplated! How do even its humblest cares become dignified by its better ends! How are its struggles sustained by the noblest moral motives! how its temptations to sanctioned frauds repelled! how the pleasures of its gains enhanced by the higher pleasures of charity and usefulness! It has a meaning in it now; and what a noble meaning! a meaning that ends not in the grave, but reaches forward indefinitely, perhaps forever!

Such is the life which your Bible teaches ;

can you hesitate to choose it? Even your selfishness, it would seem, should commend it to you.

Second. Such a consecration of property would be *one of the purest sources of happiness to any ordinary life*—a thought already anticipated, but worthy of further allusion. Man's happiness is in his own consciousness, and must therefore be derived chiefly from himself—from the exercise of his faculties and affections. The external world, by yielding him objects of pursuit, can yield him happiness principally by affording occasions for the activity of his faculties and affections. This is not the statement of a mere common-place, but of a great law of our nature, the misapprehension of which is the cause of most of the misdirected aims of men—for all these aims are in pursuit of happiness. Now the very constitution of our nature shows that the Creator designed that our benevolent affections should be among the very chief sources of our enjoyment. They are the most attractive, the most beautiful, and often the most sublime exhibitions of the human soul. Love produces even heroism oftener than do the loftier passions. The benevolent affections are characterized by one very marked fact, namely,

that their excess is less liable to evil than that of other powers of our nature, not excepting the highest moral ones. The animal appetites ruin the world by their excess; the sterner moral faculties become, in their excess, sources of terrible evil. Even conscience itself has ravaged the world with bigotry, persecution, and martyrdom. But the benevolent affections, in their very errors, are comparatively harmless; and the man in whom they are extreme, in whom their strength becomes weakness, is usually recognized as amiable in his very fault—not because he is justifiable in it, or because it may not be mischievous, but because of the essential beauty of the virtue itself—because we instinctively feel that he errs on the best side, and that a world, made up of such men, could not but be blessed, notwithstanding all their weaknesses—that love, in fine, is, in its various forms of the domestic affections, friendship, Christian communion, charity to the poor, patriotism, and philanthropy, the great remedy of the evils of the world—is summarily “the fulfilling of the law” of the universe.

But enough of this: we have to do with the practical application of it. Now the theory of secular life that we have been ad-

vocating, proposes to give these benevolent affections a chief sway through the daily pursuits of the man. Benevolence is to take the place of avarice; the thought of others to displace the undue thought of self; the end, and not the mere means, to claim the attention. A man who thus lives will have a good conscience respecting his life, without which there can be no inward comfort. If he has done any wrong in his past business—a wrong now beyond restitution—he will find in this course the best relief to his conscience, next to penitence before his God. And then who can describe the blessedness, to even a wounded spirit, of the consciousness that the widow and the fatherless child; the aged and the helpless, the offcast and the benighted, it may be even in the ends of the earth; the sick, and those that are ready to perish, are blessed by the daily toil of his corrected life? Such a man, pardoned of his sins through the only Mediator, will know what is the highest enjoyment of life. His food will be sweeter because it is shared by the destitute; his sleep will be sound with the tranquillity of a “good conscience;” the endearments of his family will be enhanced by the knowledge that other and less fortunate homes are

made happy by his charities; toil will be lightened by the sense of its generous aims; drawbacks in business felt with less selfish anxiety, and death itself comforted with the recollection of a benevolent life.

Third. Such a life can hardly fail to be *a great blessing to your family, especially in its influence on your children*. One thing is very clear—that the usual course of leaving estates to children is, in this country at least, generally defeated, or if successful, yet morally ruinous. Our successful business men are not commonly men of hereditary wealth; a good training, with but a moderate financial outfit, is acknowledged to be the best security of a young man's success; and the youth who in this country needs the fruits of his father's business in order to sustain his own, can hardly be judged competent for any business. The plan which we have recommended will, however, admit of your own capital being transferred to other hands when you have done with it, and its transference to your children will be the safer for their having been trained under the influence of your benevolent example.

The influence of such an example on children cannot but be salutary. They will

see the moral beauty and the pleasures of benevolence, especially if they are made, as they often should be, the vehicles of your bounty to others. Children frequently get ineradicable prejudices against religion from the close, selfish habits, the unchristian worldliness of their nominally Christian parents. Many a child has, through such an influence, gone from the parental door down to the gate of perdition. The example we are recommending would be a demonstration of religious principle which could hardly be resisted. "My father lived and toiled for others; he sacrificed the selfishness that actuated all the world around him, for the poor and for a good conscience; he did this because he feared God—that is proof enough, whatever may have been his failings, that his religion was sincere, and was a power within him." Such a conviction as this, deep in the heart of a child, is worth, Christian father, a thousand metaphysical arguments for your faith. Enter then upon this better life, and train your children in it after you; you may then claim the promise that "the generation of the righteous shall be blessed."

Fourth. It will be likely to *secure the prospering blessing of God upon your busi-*



ness ; it will inevitably do so unless he sees that you shall be better blessed by adversity. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." St. Paul expressly recognizes this doctrine in his plea for pecuniary charity, addressed to the Corinthians: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." It will promote such habits of thrift and circumspection as must tend to security and success in your affairs. This may seem a selfish motive ; but, in connection with the end proposed, it is far otherwise. In an essay on Scriptural Benevolence, which now lies before us, an anonymous writer states of himself that he commenced business and prosecuted it in the usual way till he lost \$900, which was all he was worth, and found himself in debt \$1,100. Being led by his trials, through God's grace, to trust, as he hoped, in Christ, he, at the age of forty, determined to take God's word for his guide in his business, and consecrated his earnings to the Lord. The first year he gave \$12. For eighteen years the amount was increased above twenty-five per cent., and the last

year he gave \$850 ; and he says he did it easier than, during the first year, he paid the \$12. Besides, though with nothing but his hands to depend on when he began this course, he paid the whole debt of \$1,100 with interest, though it took him nine years to do it. Jacob went out from his father's home "with his staff," a poor man ; but at Bethel he vowed to give God the tenth. of all that God should bestow on him. Commencing thus God blessed him ; and in twenty years he returned with great riches.

We may add the following testimony from the experience of an intelligent merchant, who says :—"In consecrating my life anew to God, aware of the ensnaring influence of riches, and the necessity of deciding on a plan of charity before wealth should bias my judgment, I adopted the following system : 'I decided to balance my accounts, as nearly as I could, every month ; and reserving such portion of profits as might appear adequate to cover probable losses, to lay aside, by entry on a benevolent account, one-tenth of the remaining profits, great or small, as a fund for benevolent expenditure, supporting myself and family on the remaining nine-tenths. I further determined, that if at any time my

net profits, that is, profits from which clerk-hire and store-expenses had been deducted, should exceed \$500 in a month, I would give twelve and a half per cent.; if over \$700, fifteen per cent.; if over \$900, seventeen and a half per cent.; if over \$1,100, twenty per cent.; if over \$1,300, twenty-two and a half per cent.; thus increasing the proportion of the whole, as God should prosper, until, at \$1,500, I should give twenty-five per cent., or \$375 a month.

As capital was of the utmost importance to my success in business, I decided not to increase the foregoing scale until I had acquired a certain capital, after which I would give one-quarter of all net profits, great or small; and on the acquisition of another certain amount of capital, I decided to give half; and on acquiring what I determined would be a full sufficiency of capital, then to give the whole of my net profits. It is now several years since I adopted this plan, and under it I have acquired a handsome capital, and have been prospered beyond my most sanguine expectations. Although constantly giving, I have never yet touched the bottom of my fund, and have repeatedly been surprised to find what large drafts it would bear. True, during

some months I have encountered a salutary trial of faith, when this rule has led me to lay by the tenth while the remainder proved inadequate to my support ; but the tide has soon turned, and with gratitude I have recognized a heavenly hand more than making good all my past deficiencies. This system has been of great advantage to me, enabling me to feel that my life is directly employed for God. It has afforded me happiness in enabling me to portion out the Lord's money, and has enlisted my mind more in the progress of Christ's cause. Happy privilege ! which the humblest may enjoy, of thus associating the common labors of life with the grateful service of the Saviour, and of making that which naturally leads the heart from God subserve the highest spiritual good. This system has saved me from commercial dangers, by leading me to simplify business and avoid extensive credits. It has made me a better merchant ; for the monthly pecuniary observations which I have been wont to take, though often quite laborious, have brought me to a better knowledge of the state of my affairs, and led me to be more cautious and prudent than I otherwise should have been. I believe this system tends to enlarge the Christian's views,

increase his disinterestedness, and lead him to shun the tricks of trade. My own observation also confirms the belief, that even warm-hearted Christians must determine beforehand on the system they will adopt if they would secure the benefits of the Gospel plan to themselves, under the grace and providence of God, or its happy results to the cause of Christ."

Fifth. It will *guard you against the perils of avarice*. A thoughtful man cannot read the Scriptures without being struck by the peculiar emphasis with which covetousness is denounced. We need not here quote examples; they will recur to every reader, and we have already referred to them repeatedly. Unquestionably our Lord and his apostles looked upon this vice as having a malignity and a peril peculiarly its own. We have already shown that it is referred to by the Scriptures as summarily heathenism—"idolatry." The nominal Christian who should be found guilty of it, was thereby placed so entirely out of the ranks of Christianity as to be undistinguishable from the mass of the heathen, more so than by any other vice except express idolatry; and the sin is so repeatedly characterized in this manner as to show that it was looked upon

as altogether a peculiar enormity. The covetous man is not only called an "idolater," (that is, a heathen,) but his vice is catalogued among the most abominable turpitudes of Paganism, and this is done over and over again.\*

There was reason for this peculiarity of the Scriptural denunciation of covetousness, in its very nature and in its peculiar dangers.

There are three frightful characteristics of this vice. One is the fact, that more than any other single vice, however enormous, it blights the whole circle of the virtues. What other sin so much indurates the moral nature?

It benumbs the conscience, and denies, almost invariably, to its victim the sense that accompanies nearly every other vice—the sense of its guilt. The miser believes himself right.

It withers the natural affections more than

\* "Covetousness, which is idolatry," says St. Paul. The phrase is a striking one. "Idolatry" was a synonym for heathenism, with all its attendant abominations. "Covetousness" in the Church was, therefore, in a sense, the *retention of heathenism*—"idolatry." It is notable how *specifically* this sin is thus described. In another epistle Paul says—"This ye know, that no covetous man, *who is an idolater*, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God"—i. e. the Church.

any other vicious influence : children, wife, parents are not unfrequently allowed to suffer through its grasping closeness.

It adds sometimes to its own inherent viciousness something like the guilt of suicide, by preying upon itself—its miserable victim, apparently hallucinated, depriving himself of comfortable food, clothing, and furniture, and reducing himself to extremity, in order still to save, even when old age or sickness shows that death is at the door.

So peculiarly inveterate is this vice, that, like some reptiles which subsist by killing others, it not only blights generally the virtues, but it absorbs away many of the other vices, at least the positive vices. The miser is seldom a drunkard, or a libertine, or a litigator, or even a gambler, because these vices are too expensive. The drunkard or the libertine may have individual virtues left ; he may be capable of charity, of friendship, of patriotism, or even of compunction ; but the miser usually knows them not. His vice comes the nearest to the death of the soul of perhaps any that is practicable to man.

And to this peculiar malignity we may impute, perhaps, the other peculiar charac-

teristic to which we have alluded, namely, that it is, apparently, the most irremediable of vices.

Drunkards, libertines, and other vicious men are often restored, but who ever knew a miser reclaimed? The writer of these pages has been in public life for more than a quarter of a century, with very numerous opportunities of observing the fate of criminal men; he has seen the most offcast plucked from the very mire of vice, and restored to virtue and happiness; he has seen the penitent and purified murderer ascend the platform of the gallows, with humble hope through the infinite merit of Him who saved the thief on the cross; but he has never known a single example of the permanent recovery of a man who has once abandoned himself to habitual covetousness. He denies not the possibility of such an example, but he has never known one. The fearful power of the habit may be apparently broken for a time, under some extraordinary religious influence; but it almost invariably returns, like the expelled demon, with seven-fold more power, and destroys its victim.

The peculiar intensity of this passion is, doubtless, in part owing to its peculiar power



over the intellectual as well as the moral nature. No other vice seems to produce so insidiously, and yet so surely, that sort of hallucination called monomania. The miser is habitually apprehending extreme poverty; the calm and majestic power of reason itself shrivels under the paralyzing vice. Money loses its character as a means of other good; it becomes, as we have shown, the end at which his irrational eagerness aims. He often sacrifices the ends which he may have previously obtained by it for the sake of increasing the mere means; he extends this sacrifice sometimes to the utmost, and, to crown the folly of his madness, he clutches his gains the more fiercely as he declines in life, and can have less prospect of using them. Even the agony of death becomes often but the agony of separation from his gold. Frightful perversion of heart and intellect!

Vice bears in itself much of its retribution, and in nothing more than in the fact that its power over its victim increases with the increase of his sin. God has thus allowed it to be made terrible; and in the mental effect—the hallucination of this passion—we see his appalling curse upon it. Perhaps no sin that is practicable, under our own dis-

pensation, comes nearer to being the seal of an irrevocable reprobation. Flee it, man of God ! flee it without delay ! Nearly all the usual conditions of business life, as now pursued, expose you to it ; perhaps it has already begun to bind your soul. Break the chain before it encircles you forever. You may yet escape. There is great power in the purpose of the will ; there is mighty power in the inspired grace of God, even in a debilitated soul. We have met with the description of the escape of a caged eagle : the noble bird had begun to droop under its confinement ; its keeper resolved to give it its liberty ; many gathered around to see it take its flight ; the cage was opened ; it gazed calmly at the spectators and at the opened door for a few minutes, as if resignedly distrusting its enfeebled powers, then spreading its wings, fluttered away ; but after circling two or three times in the air over its late prison, it shot upward toward the sun till it was lost from sight in the height of the heavens. So may thy soul escape from the terrible prison-house of this evil. Be prompt for the flight ! Pledge yourself to such a covenant with your God as we have recommended. Recall those terrible admonitions respecting the dangers of

wealth, with which the New Testament is interspersed. To most readers they seem little more than rhetorical expletives; and yet these rigorous sentences on the use and dangers of money are stern and abiding truths. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or one tittle will not pass from them. They may be forgotten, or depreciated as insignificant common-places; but they will flame out on the books of the final judgment, and you will stand or fall by them forever. Every accumulating dollar is with you either an instrument of good or a sinking weight. Are you then prospering—are you laying up treasure upon earth—you, the redeemed child of Him who had not where to lay his head, and who, though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor? Pause, then, and examine your stewardship. Perhaps you are old, and descending to your grave; and yet, through years of accumulation, have not once considered this point, or estimated how much could be spared from your just wants for the cause of God. Would to God that this word of warning could arrest you a moment, and direct your thoughts intently on the question! A hundred paltry suggestions are now doubtless trying to divert you from it; but O! permit them

not ; think—think this once on the subject, and remember, while thinking, that on your right and on your left, before you and behind you, millions are sinking into eternal death—millions whom your Lord redeemed by the blood and agony through which you have hope !

And remember, further, that he that serves his Lord in the right use of his gains, shall not fail of a reward in that world to which those gains can never be carried. Through the atonement alone can we enter safely that world ; but our good deeds, sanctified by the atonement, shall be acceptable unto God, and be crowned with an everlasting “recompense of reward.” They may raise thither, to share and enhance our own blessedness, many souls that might otherwise be lost. Surely, then, he alone is the wise man who thus invests his property ; with him, its tenure ends not in the grave—he has a fee-simple in it forever. The Scriptures assert that “he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”

We have detailed, somewhat, in the pre-

ceding pages, the present results of Scriptural beneficence; but who shall unfold its consequences beyond the grave? "This life," says some one, "is but the early spring of our existence. The utmost reach of our present destiny is this alone—to sow the seed of happiness and wait the summer morning of its resurrection, for the harvest is the end of the world. Let us be intent on this great end, and aim meanwhile to break the fallow ground, stir up the loosened soil, and sow beside all waters, knowing that we shall reap if we faint not, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

WE have endeavored to comprehend in the preceding chapters, the main points of this great subject. Many *objections* to the methodical beneficence for which we plead have been indirectly anticipated, especially in our enumeration of its advantages; but we would refer to some of them more distinctly.

First. It is sometimes said that such a cov-

enanted plan of life looks too much like *bargaining with God*—that it turns religion into a commercial transaction, on the principle of the *quid pro quo* between the good man and his Lord. Doubtless some very frank-hearted Christians entertain this objection; it is not at first view without a slight plausibility. But can it bear a momentary examination? Is not the whole Christian life an analogous covenant with God? And is not this plea but a special application of that covenant to a very special case which is found liable to be specially exceptionable to it, through the peculiar besetments of worldly business? Has it not always been recognized as well and even necessary for good men thus to set a special guard upon their besetting liabilities? Do not the Scriptures invite us continually to such covenants with God? Does man repent, believe, deny himself, or take one step in the Christian life, but that he may escape the wrath to come, and receive at last “the recompense of reward.” And if it be insisted that the love of holiness, for itself alone, is the only legitimate motive to the Christian life, even in the yet unholy but penitential mind that is turning from sin unto righteousness—still does not this very motive itself apply, with all-commanding force, to such a

consecration of property and business as we have advanced? If not looking to the final reward, still for the present enjoyment of a holy life, what direction of your secular affairs could be more desirable? It is useless to argue further on a point so obvious.

Second. A more formidable objection is, that *I am in debt*. Should I not pay off my honest debts before I put my property thus under contribution for charitable purposes? There are cases in which undoubtedly you should; but "be not deceived," "God is not mocked;" and there is often in this sort of reasoning a most sophistical and self-depraving mockery of God. A man in extensive business may easily continue to be all the time in debt: so far as his outstanding liabilities are concerned, he will most probably be so, and yet may be always rich. Can he thus evade his duty to the perishing? His own conscience will save us the necessity of reasoning here with him. He would be quick to detect any similar fallacy in the transactions of his customers with himself; let him be aware that God will, sooner or later, detect it and expose it in his own case.

Such are not really instances of debt; but in real instances how should our plan apply?

We think there can be but little difficulty on the part of a right-minded man in determining the question. Where he is doing business on borrowed capital, the terms upon which he has borrowed it must guide him. If his charities do not interfere with his terms of payment (of both interest and principal) why should he excuse himself? And what difficulty can there be in the accommodation of his plan of giving to any such higher or prior obligations? Of course he cannot give as much as if he were unclogged by debt—the blessedness and pleasure of a larger liberality he may not yet allow himself—but he can do something; he ought to do something; and to do it systematically will be a relief, rather than an embarrassment to his peculiar circumstances. The point for him to determine is not the obligation to give, but how to accommodate his liabilities to this obligation.

There is but one case of indebtedness which, we think, entirely cancels for the time being the obligation of giving, and that is *insolvency* itself, wherever it is real, though through the kindness of creditors it may not be open, and subject to its usual embarrassments. In such circumstances justice must take precedence of mercy.



In fine, the only question growing out of the liabilities of indebtedness concerns the duty of giving, not the method of giving. If the obligation to give at all remains, then the plan we have recommended comes in, we repeat, as a relief to the obligation; and it has more advantages for a man under the supposed liabilities than for any other.

Third. Beguile not yourself, Christian brother, with the thought that *posthumous charity* will excuse a duty like the present. We would not be inconsiderate, even in so plain and urgent a matter. We will admit that there may be some cases in which posthumous liberality is preferable to continuous, life-long charity; but they are very extraordinary, and always suspicious.\*

Very few posthumous charities can be mentioned which would not have been more beneficent and more economical, if effected during the life-time and under the guidance of the donor. Most such charities are largely wasted or misapplied. The greatest

\* Marseilles, in France, was supplied with water by a citizen, who devoted his whole energy, and lived like a miser, that he might provide a large posthumous fund for the purpose, in default of the disposition of the public authorities to provide it. He was reproached while living as a miser, but honored when dead as a wise benefactor.

instances of the kind on record are examples of the remark. Except in instances of legal restriction or personal necessity, the only possible justification of posthumous liberality, as a *substitute for liberality during life*, is in a single class of cases—*such as require a sum of so great a magnitude that it cannot be accumulated but through a whole life*. And is this, Christian reader, honestly your case? If not, entertain not for a moment the thought that you can excuse your conscience in the neglect of your present duty. What! can we affect to offer with our dying hand, as a substitute for the omitted duties of a charitable life, the property that we can no longer use as our own, and which we only snatch from our heirs as an apology to God for our past selfishness?

Fourth. *The difficulty of adjusting any method of beneficence to certain kinds or states of business*, is sometimes alleged as an objection. If we were to admit that there were any real difficulty of the kind, still we might insist on the conceded duty of *some degree* of liberality under any circumstances, (with the single exception of insolvency,) and then on the fact that to this degree, at least, it might be methodically conducted. But is there any business, or any state of any

business, which a conscientious man cannot adjust (and even with advantages) to some such plan? A conscientious man cannot well do business without ascertaining at suitable times its real condition; and this ascertainment, so essential, alike in his poverty and his prosperity, is all that is requisite for the system we have proposed. Let not, then, the Christian business man allow himself to be influenced by such evasions. If he is resolute to know and to do his duty, they will be but as cobwebs before him.

Fifth. Without such resolution he will also find himself beset with another, a less reasonable but more effective difficulty—a *vague disposition to postpone the whole matter*, with the admission at the same time, however, that it is very desirable and right in itself—that it would be of incalculable value were it general to the Christian Church; that in view of these facts it may even be, in many cases, a matter of duty, but still a duty to be attended to sooner or later, not precisely *now*. This, Christian brother, is the reasoning that has betrayed most lost souls; it is the universal sophism against all appeals of truth; it is the self-license of nearly all sin in the world. You had to withstand it when you first turned

your feet heavenward. Withstand it now ! The “ more convenient time ” seldom comes. Seize, then, the present for the determination of this great crisis in your life. It will be to you such a crisis, however humble your lot ; it will make you a “ king and a priest unto God ” in the lowliest sphere of business. You cannot be a worldly man while acting in the world from such principles ; you can no longer even be an ordinary Christian while giving to your secular life such an extraordinary consecration. What live you for, if it be not to excel in the virtues of your faith ? What is the ultimatum of all life to you, if it be not to give a good account of it in the “ last day ? ” Why hesitate, then, in a matter like this ? Does it approve itself to your conscience ? Can you, then, so treat it without harm to your conscience ? Do you think it would please your Lord ? Do you doubt that ? If it would, can you neglect it without displeasing Him ? And now, after this review of the entire subject, does not the whole argument sum itself up before you as a categorical question of *duty*—of the peace or trouble of your conscience, and your accountability in “ the great and terrible day ” of the Lord ? We have not insisted that the Scriptural rule,

explicit as we have shown it to be, is of literal and invariable application; personal circumstances must often qualify its application; but now, that you are closing this discussion, does not the subject force itself upon you as practicable, as urgent, as an indispensable duty? Evade it not, then!

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.”

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## CONCLUSION.

THE DUTY OF A HIGHER STANDARD OF BENEFICENCE AS INFERRED FROM THE MORAL EXIGENCIES OF OUR COUNTRY.

THE sudden outspread of our country within a few years, with the numerous new and national consequences attendant upon it, has hardly been appreciated by most of its citizens—especially by Christian citizens. The politicians—the demagogues—have taken it into account, estimating well its bearings on their party schemes; but the friends of education and religion, they who have in their

hands the most intrinsic elements of the national well-being, are they conscious of the stupendous out-growth of the republic—of the perilous elements of its population—of the almost inevitable and, we were about to say, immeasurable disproportion which will soon exist between that population and the provisions of education and religion which we are making for it?

Let us look at the facts. In less than half a century from this date *more than one hundred millions* of human souls will be dependent upon these provisions for their intellectual and moral nutriment. They bear now no adequate relation to the necessities of the land. Our larger communities are continually degenerating; our new territories make but a dubious moral progress. Ask yourself, then, the question, Christian citizen, if, after more than two centuries of religious and educational efforts, under the most auspicious circumstances of the country, we have but partially provided for twenty-five millions, how shall we, in only fifty years, meet the immensely enlarged moral wants of four times that number—of a *hundred millions*? The question is an appalling one. Our rapid growth, so much the boast of the nation, is, be assured, its most imminent

peril—it is too rapid to be healthful; it is to be the severest test of both our religion and our liberties, for the one is the essential condition of the other. And yet it cannot, by any probable contingencies, be restrained. It has a momentum which will bear down and overleap all the ordinary obstructions of population. We cannot want work, we cannot want bread; and where these exist, population must advance as inevitably as the waters under the laws of the tide. Every growth of this population provides indeed, somewhat morally as well as materially, for the next growth; but the law of proportion must fail in this respect, under our rapid advance and the peculiar elements of our growth.

When we remind ourselves that so much of this popular increase is from abroad, that Europe has been in an “exodus” toward our shores, that its ignorance and vice—wave overtopping wave—roll in upon the land, the danger assumes a startling aspect. *In about forty-six years from this day, our population shall equal the present aggregate population of England, France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Denmark.* A step further in the calculation presents a prospect still more surprising and impressive:

*in about seventy-six years* (we use exact terms, for we reckon by exact data) from to-day, this mighty mass of commingled peoples will have swollen to the stupendous aggregate of *two hundred and forty-six millions*—equaling the present population of all Europe. According to the statistics of life, there are hundreds of thousands of our present population—one twenty-ninth at least—who will witness this truly grand result. What have you, friends of education and religion, what have you to do within that time? Your present intellectual and moral provisions for the people are, as we have said, far short of the wants of your present twenty-five millions; and in seventy-six years you must provide for more than *two hundred and twenty additional millions*, and these millions, to a great extent, composed of semi-barbarous foreigners and their mistreated children.

Look at the facts, we again repeat. Ponder them, and let every good man who has a cent to give or a prayer to offer for his country, feel that on us, the citizens of the republic, at this the middle of the nineteenth century, devolves a moral exigency such as, perhaps, no other land ever saw—an exigency as full of sublimity as it is of urgency—as



grand in its opportunity as it is in its magnificent peril.

This immense prospective population—certain, though prospective—is to be thrown out, by the almighty hand of Providence, upon one of the grandest arenas of the world. Here, on this large continent, bounded in its distant independence by the Atlantic, the Pacific, the great tropic gulf, and the Arctic—here, away from the traditional governments and faiths and other antiquated checks of the old world, it is to play its great drama of destiny—of destiny which, as we have shown, must, numerically at least, be in seventy-six years as potential as all present Europe, and how much more potential in all moral, political, and commercial respects? What an idea would it be—that of all Europe consolidated into one mighty, untrammelled commonwealth, in the highest civilization, liberty, religious enlightenment, and industrial development—and this mighty revolution to be completed in seventy-six years from to-day! Who would credit the conception? Yet our republic will, in that time, more than realize the stupendous idea, if its unity and moral character be not sacrificed.

Look at its field. According to an official report, the total area of the United States

and territories in 1853 was 2,983,153 square miles. This estimate is found to be even short of the truth: various official reports from the Land Office, and the aggregate of the census, show 3,220,572 square miles.

It is estimated from these facts that the territorial extent of the republic is nearly ten times as large as that of Great Britain and France united, three times as large as the whole of Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland and Denmark combined; one and a half times as large as the Russian empire in Europe; one-sixth less only than the area covered by the fifty-nine or sixty empires, states, or republics of Europe; of equal extent with the Roman empire, or that of Alexander, neither of which is said to have exceeded three millions of square miles.

What a theater is this for the achievements of civilization and religion! Surely there should be "giants in these days" to enact worthily the enterprises of such a field. And if circumstances make men, are we not to hope that the consciousness of this unparalleled destiny will enlarge and ennoble the intellect, the philanthropy, and moral energy of the country to a scale of corresponding magnificence—will bring forth sub-

lime examples of public devotion, of talent, of moral heroism, and of munificence?

Look at one other fact—a most interesting one—the large proportion of our *juvenile* population. It is a most impressive argument for the friends of education, and especially of Sunday schools. Where there is plenty of food, as there must indefinitely be in this country, there will always be plenty of children. It is a beneficent, a beautiful law; but this remark only *en passant*. *More than half our present white population* are yet in what may be called the flower of youth. We almost literally present an example of national adolescence—the freshness, the ardor, the vigor, and the susceptibility of childhood and young manhood. The white population in 1850 was 19,553,068; that portion which was under twenty years of age, 10,130,731; under one year, 537,661; between one and five, 2,358,797; five and ten, 2,704,128; ten and fifteen, 2,402,129; fifteen and twenty, 2,128,116. Total, 10,130,731.

Pause here, educators, Sunday-school teachers and patrons, all you upon whom devolves the instruction of the young of the country, or who have the pecuniary means of providing it; see you not that its destiny

is in your hands? The population of to-day is to surpass the millions of Europe in about seventy-five years; and you, yes, precisely you, hold within your power one-half of the population of to-day, one-half the present elements of the grand geometrical progression. Work out, then, with a tireless hand and a sublime consciousness, this mighty arithmetic of destiny.

This is the first, because the most momentous lesson of the subject. We have not introduced our calculations to croak over them; they are grave, they are almost solemn in their importance; but they challenge us to action, not to despair. We think it may be soberly said that never before was there a battle-field for humanity like this; never were the elements of good and evil set forth against each other in a grander arena; never was humanity thrown out upon conditions more experimental—more free from the trammels of old institutions, of old traditions, of old lies. It must be mighty here—that is inevitable; but it will be mighty in the strength of its wickedness, like the antediluvian giants who brought the world to dissolution, or mighty in the virtues which shall subdue the world to the reign of intelligence, virtue, and

liberty. They who have the means of educating the young can lay a mightier hand upon this sublime future than any other heroes in the field. The legislators of the land, its high places of power and of professional life, may do much for it; but its humble places of education, its Sunday-schools especially, are its true fortresses—"the cheap defense of nations," as Burke called chivalry.

These calculations present a lesson, a startling one, respecting the necessity of re-enforcing the means of public worship. It seems almost impracticable that adequate provisions of religion can be made for this rapid progress of population. Let us look at the facts here again, not to despond over them, but to arouse our sense of duty. According to the census returns, the aggregate "accommodations" of all the sects of the land, for religious worship, do not now amount to thirteen million eight hundred and fifty thousand: these include not only churches or chapels, but halls, &c., used for public worship. Deduct the Roman Catholics and other non-evangelical sects, and you have but little more than thirteen million "sittings." Hardly more than half your present population have, therefore, such

accommodations—this after generations of effort and expenditure. How, then, are you to provide, in about seventy-five years, for two hundred and twenty additional millions? Does not the voice of Providence, like the trumpet of destiny, call upon you to arise to this great emergency? Did there ever pass over any Christian land a day like that which is now rising upon yours? Was there ever a period in which more energy, self-sacrifice, unresting labor, devolved upon the Church?

And how are we, in this comparatively brief period, to meet the national necessity for public religious teachers? The pulpit is the citadel of truth in the world. No free legislative halls can stand where stand no free pulpits. Already the land suffers for want of preachers. The complaint comes from all its length and breadth. Every denomination utters it. The Christian ministry is unquestionably in a comparative decline throughout the country. Temporary causes may contribute to the melancholy fact—the absorption of our young men by money-making pursuits, through the excitements produced by the California mines, and the great consequent outbreak of all sorts of business. But independently of these inter-

ferences, how are we to provide, within seventy-five years, the ministrations which shall be demanded by two hundred and twenty additional millions of people? Look at the question—pause over it. Is it not manifest that the new form of *lay ministry* connected with our tract societies—that *col-porteurs* must supply a large proportion of this demand, and that the liberality of the Church must sustain them? This, indeed, seems to be the special provision of Providence for the exigency.

We must look to God in incessant prayers that he would raise up laborers, but we must also look to ourselves. We must open our eyes to the overwhelming exigency; we must talk about it, write about it, preach about it, till we move the Church as in a crusade for the salvation of the land. The young men of the Church must be everywhere rallied to her pulpit batteries. They must be made to feel that an extraordinary providential call for them is reverberating all along its altars; that Protestant Christianity, with its consequences to civilization and liberty, here in its chief field on the earth, devolves its destiny upon them; that the hour has come for self-sacrifices and moral heroism such as no other modern age has seen

in Christendom. This is not rhetoric; it is stringent logic. We have given the proofs, mathematical proofs. Popery, infidelity, and popular depravity confront us here in an open field, and challenge us to a pitched and conclusive battle. Who that loves the Church and his country can be indifferent to the call?

Is it not obvious that the religious philanthropy of the land must be redoubled, and that right speedily? It has been increasing greatly within a few years. In this respect alone we have a providential indication that we may pass safely through the crisis. The idea of "systematic beneficence"—of the consecration of business life on the same principle as the consecration of missionary life itself—is dawning into the mind of the Church. There are now not a few successful Christian merchants and mechanics who feel that they are not "*proprietors*, but *stewards* of their property," and must give account in the "great day," who are convinced they "are not their own," but belong unto the Lord, and that they have no more right to "live unto themselves" than has their Christian brother, the missionary in the ends of the earth. This, as we have shown, is not a religious whim—it is a great logical



principle of practical Christianity. It is the idea, next to the purity of the Church, that is to save the world ; and the lack of it has, more than anything else, postponed its salvation. It is yet to become general. The world is now nearly all open, as we have seen, for Christian propagandism. There are pecuniary resources enough in Christendom to cover the earth with the light of the truth. We need but to call out those resources, and this can only be done by enforcing everywhere the true idea of the *relation of Christian men to their property*. The pulpit, tracts, and prize essays are discussing it ; they must discuss it more and more. The revolution we have predicted in this respect must be effected. The moral prospect of our country, as we have shown it, demonstrates the doctrine overwhelmingly. Christian business men, look forth upon that prospect, and ask what your country and your religion demand of you under such circumstances. Labor in your workshops and your marts for the common salvation. Endow schools, promote publications, send forth laborers. It is a sublime opportunity for you ; it will ennoble and sanctify from their sordidness the pursuits of your secular life ; you will no longer live only to live, but for moral

ends, which will glorify both your life and your death. For you who, as Christian men, "look for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour," any other life is a solecism which will be fearfully refuted; if not now, yet in the hour of death or the day of judgment.

We have written these remarks with emphasis, but with sober and stern arguments,—“mathematical arguments,” as we have called them. How could such a subject be treated otherwise than emphatically? Was there ever a matter of greater urgency presented to this Christian nation? We are reluctant to dismiss it, and yet would not impair the effect of our reasonings by their length. The subject has its dark side, but we do not despond. Through the indifference of the Church of the land, a fearful night may lower over our children, but we will hope otherwise. All the indications of Providence would seem to betoken the breaking up of heathenism and Mohammedanism, and the general triumph of the truth. Let us, then, rather hope that “the night is far spent, the day is at hand; and let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.”

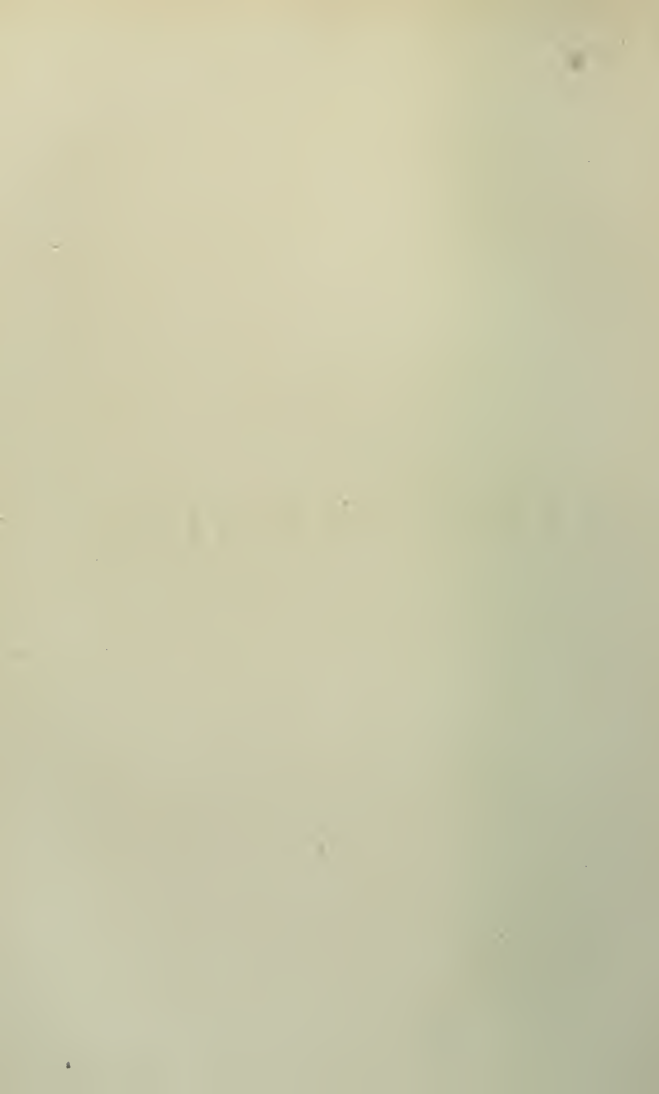
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THE

GREAT QUESTION.

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THE  
GREAT QUESTION;

OR,

HOW SHALL I MEET THE CLAIMS OF GOD  
UPON MY PROPERTY?

*A Prize Essay.*

BY REV. LORENZO WHITE,

OF THE NEW-ENGLAND CONFERENCE.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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WE ask for "The Great Question" the thorough examination and calm consideration of the Christian Church. "How shall I meet the claims of God upon my property?" is a neglected question. It is much more common to ask, How shall I increase my property? How shall I retain it? In what manner shall I invest it to make it most productive, or how use it most for my own gratification? Thus the gathering of dust becomes the life-labor of a probationer for eternity. The muscles, the nervous energy, the thoughts, the affections, and the active powers of mind, are all concentrated upon acquisitions which are only valuable in exchange, and finally, as through

Gospel agencies, they shall be instrumental in bringing pardon, and life, and purity to immortal souls. Dying men fix their habitations upon earth. Sinners, hastening to the judgment, treasure up gold; and, doing it in opposition to the divine command, with it they "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

It is surely time for the reader to inquire, in all candor and earnestness, "How shall I meet the claims of God upon my property?" He surely has claims—valid, serious, imperative claims—which he has never waived for a moment, and which he will enforce in the day of final retribution. This is a sincere and thorough effort to ascertain these claims in the light of divine revelation, and to answer the question which, we trust, you are now moved to ask. At least read it. Ask the light of God upon your soul while you read. "What is truth?"



in regard to this subject, ought to be the only question with you. Shrink from no conclusions which you shall find sustained by the word of God. They cannot harm you. They will "lead you into green pastures;" they will relieve, refresh, and invigorate your inquiring, doubting spirit; give you sweet rest from the perplexities of a life-time, and ample treasures "in bags that wax not old."

Well may the author call this "The Great Question." For your own soul, next to the question of personal salvation, there is scarcely a greater. Equal, indeed, to the stern importance of the inquiries, How shall I be delivered from the earthliness of my fallen nature? what shall be my remedy for "covetousness, which is idolatry?" how shall I shake myself from the dust of earth, that I may be prepared for the spirit-world? how shall I identify myself, in every particular, with the advancing cause of the Redeemer?

how shall I glorify my Maker on earth, and find my way to heaven, is the question: "How shall I meet the claims of God upon my property?" Search, we beseech you, in this volume, in other kindred works, in the Holy Bible, and all in the spirit of humble, submissive prayer, that you may settle it clearly, safely, and permanently.

The question of this book is rapidly becoming the great question of the age, and we are thankful to God that the call of the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church has brought out an argument so strong, and fearless, and instructive.

JESSE T. PECK.

NEW-YORK, *Dec.* 20, 1855.

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# THE G R E A T   Q U E S T I O N.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SUBJECT STATED.

THE earnest Christian has neither time nor inclination for fault-finding. There is a bright as well as a dark view before him. True, contrasting the world as it is with the world as it ought to be, the deficiency is startling. So, to a great extent, it is with the Church. She does but little compared with her ability to do. A large proportion of her resources has never been consecrated to the Christian cause. Her heart is divided between charity and selfishness—between Christ and the world. It would be easy to write a book devoted to an exhibition of her inconsistency. But this alone would be useless; it would be an additional example of time, and talent, and money wasted. The faults of the Church should be faithfully pointed

out to her; but to stop here would be to dishearten her.

The Church is still instrumentally the light of the world. Her power to reflect the life-giving beams of Christianity is, of course, proportionate to her purity, or, which is the same thing, to her piety. It cannot be denied that there are some spots upon her disk; but in looking at these let us not forget the real brightness which surrounds and reveals them. Possibly we shall even find, by attentive examination, that some of the dark appearances which attract so much attention, and are the occasion of so many reproaches, are only clouds obscuring portions which are pure, and would, if not thus prevented, reflect the light with greatest power. If this is found to be the case, the natural order will be first, if possible, to remove the clouds. Then the actual spots will be seen more distinctly, and their nature will be better understood. The conviction of the writer is, that the Church is not, at heart, so impure as many suppose. She has more conscience toward God than has yet been brought to bear upon the accomplishment of the great work which is assigned to her. She has more of the spirit of consecration than has yet been de-

veloped in the form of benevolence, and more benevolence than has found expression in beneficence. We will not stop to speculate upon the degree in which this disproportion exists; but our honest opinion is that, if proper measures were adopted by those whom God has appointed as leaders in the Church, her contributions and other efforts would ere long be increased many fold.

There are two great questions which cover the whole field of profitable inquiry before us:—1. Given the present piety of the Church: How shall we secure a corresponding degree of beneficent action? 2. Given the entire resources of the Church: How shall her piety be so increased as to secure to the cause of beneficence the consecration of all her resources?

These questions are very closely related. The solution of the second depends upon that of the first. To increase the piety of the Church we must call into vigorous and well-directed activity that which now exists, for exercise is a law of growth. And since Christian beneficence is piety in exercise, evidently the largest growth of piety demands that the most efficient means be employed to call forth beneficence. Prac-

tically, then, the second question merges in the first: How shall the piety of the Church be most successfully called into exercise in the cause of Christian beneficence? The answer is two-fold.

1. The motives to Christian beneficence must be clearly and fully placed before the Church in their proper order. She must have a complete and systematic view of the subject. Motives may be resisted. Their province, indeed, is not to enslave, but to make free; but for this purpose they are indispensable. No one can act without them any more than he can breathe without air or walk upon vacuity. But in whatever degree there is real principle, the presentation of motives will infallibly awaken a disposition to act it out. Now piety is the foundation principle of beneficence; and since the Church has a measure of this principle, we may, in the outset, be assured that when we place the motives to beneficence properly before her, they will not fail to thrill her heart with a desire to act; and that to the extent of her piety, if intelligently guided, she will act.

2. The Church must be led to the adoption of a systematic plan of operation. This will enable her to act, and to act efficiently to



the extent of her ability, thus at the same time securing an amount of beneficence commensurate with her present piety, and providing the conditions of its constant growth.

Some may conclude that if this is all which is essential to secure the resources of the Church to the cause of Christian beneficence, it can be accomplished very easily. But this is a mistake. Something more than one or two eloquent sermons from the pulpit and a few bold dashes of the pen will be found necessary. Not so easily is the force of long-established habit broken, and a chronic indifference to duty overcome. Still the path to certain success is a plain one. Exhibit to the Church the great motives to beneficence in all their grandeur and power, and inspire her with confidence by pointing out to her the true method of effort, and generous responses will be heard throughout her ranks.

To the extent, however, that method in beneficence has been submitted to the judgment of the Church, we shall leave the subject to those who are better capable of advising. But we shall find that Revelation affords us much clear light even in respect to the mode of operation. It distinctly and

repeatedly enjoins system in the discharge of this duty ; and, if we mistake not its teachings, it authoritatively furnishes us with certain rules of action which are of general adaptation.

Our task now lies plainly before us. It is, to place before the reader the Scriptural motives to Christian beneficence. But this, as we have seen, is not a beneficence without system. Christian beneficence and systematic beneficence are synonymous, save that the former term is the more specific. Every Scriptural motive to beneficence, then, is a motive to systematic beneficence. Hence a full view of the motives to Christian beneficence requires an exhibition of the efficient and authoritative system by which it is distinguished. He only is entitled to a reputation for Christian beneficence whose benefactions, both in measure and manner, accord with the standard prescribed in the Bible.

The various motives to beneficence differ so immeasurably in strength, that at first view it might be thought by some, since the weaker appear so insignificant in comparison, that it would be better to direct attention exclusively to the stronger. But this, however skillfully done, would be to present only a partial and incoherent view of the

subject. Though the various motives spring from distinct sources, they are exhibited in a symmetrical plan formed by infinite wisdom for this very purpose. Thus we have the fullest assurance that no one of them is superfluous. Indeed, no one can be seen in all its force if isolated from the rest. Besides, the divine Author of them all is also the Architect of the human mind; and, beyond a doubt, he has exactly suited them to its wants. Plainly, then, the blended influence of all the Scriptural motives to beneficence is needed to inspire us with a zeal which, both in nature and degree, shall be according to knowledge.

We enter upon our task thus defined with a cheerful confidence that our labor will not be in vain. Imperfect its performance must be we know; but it cannot be otherwise than that the heart of the Christian should grow warm in the contemplation of a theme which, from every point of view, is so full of affinities with his renewed nature. We shall take for granted that the reader would have us present the subject plainly. May we not also take for granted a hearty response? Impatient denunciation we do not approve. It is useless and unbecoming. Prompt, energetic, persevering action is what is needed.

Ministers, leaders, stewards—all who are conscious that the present sacrifices of the Church are below the standard of duty, and are inadequate to meet the wants of the Christian cause, must contribute and combine their influence to heighten her zeal, and to secure the adoption of broader and more efficient measures.

But let us not forget that our part is to lead, not to drive. First of all, example is called for. A few examples the Church already has before her. Among the brightest of these is that of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. But examples are still the great want among us. Let the reader, if he has not already done so, without delay, add one to the number. It will do little good to talk unless we act up to our convictions. If we would see the Church rise to the true standard, we must first rise to it ourselves. God has ordained that zeal shall kindle zeal; and that we may all have a perfect example, and one embodying the highest possible motives, he has placed his own beneficent character before us for imitation. These are the words of the great Teacher: "Be ye therefore merciful [that is, Do good even to the unthankful and the evil] as your Father also is merciful."

## CHAPTER II.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE MOTIVES TO BENEFICENCE,  
AND PARTICULARLY OF OUR OBLIGATION OF  
GRATITUDE TO GOD, AS EXHIBITED IN THE  
GREAT SYSTEM OF DIVINE BENEFICENCE.

IN the command to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful, we have, in general terms, a clear and full statement of the Christian duty under consideration, and at the same time a most forcible appeal to an obligation of gratitude. God calls on us to be beneficent to our fellow-men who are his own creatures; and, as the standard of our beneficence, and the measure of our obligation of gratitude to comply, he refers to his own beneficence, of which we are all objects. That we may intelligently view this obligation, we must, of course, have an acquaintance with the leading features in the divine plan of beneficence. Indeed, the divine plan includes all our beneficent efforts, and it is obvious that to have a correct view of the part which we are called to act, we must have some knowledge of the whole plan, and especially of the relation which our particular

part sustains to the whole. Let this, then, engage our attention in the present chapter.

“God is love,” is the comprehensive declaration of the inspired volume. This is not the whole of theology, but it is its sublimest truth. Love is the crowning, perfecting glory of all the divine attributes, and concentrates them all upon the great work of beneficence—of promoting the happiness and welfare of created beings.

The exhibitions which God has made of his love are worthy of himself. The very first which arrests our attention, is his creation of man in his own image, thereby rendering man capable of this attribute of love, which shines with such splendor in his own character, and is the infinite source of his own happiness. But even this, wonderful as it is, has been exceeded. This glorious wording forth of God’s benevolent disposition cost no sacrifice: “He spake and it was done.” But when man ungratefully rebelled against God, and incurred his righteous displeasure, then was divine love put to the severest test. Yet it was equal to the emergency. God so loved man that he spared not his own Son, but sent him into the world to die as his ransom, and thus avert the sword of justice from the criminal. Such

is the expense at which he satisfied the inflexible demands of his holy law, that he might reach forth the omnipotent arm of his beneficence, and lift the miserable culprit from the depth of his degradation to his own bosom, and receive him again as a child.

In comparison with these manifestations of beneficence, all earthly blessings seem very insignificant. Viewed in themselves they are so. But earthly blessings are intended as a means, not as an end. They are only instrumental. It is the power of love possessed by man—God's image in his nature—which renders them valuable to him. They are a part of a grand scheme—the divine *system* of beneficence.

Another part of this *system* is found in the endearing relations which mankind are permitted to sustain, as members of families, as neighbors, as citizens, as a great brotherhood embracing the entire human race. These relations have been instituted, that man's native power of love may find expression and expansion in loving his fellow-man; and this earth, filled to profusion with temporal blessings, has been lent to him in order to furnish him with the requisite resources for acting out his love for his race—

of being beneficent as well as benevolent—of doing good to his brother-man as well as wishing him good.

In carrying out this great *system* of beneficence, the Creator has so constituted man that he needs the aid and sympathy of his fellows, and that a share in the good things of the earth is essential to his present life and happiness, and may be promotive of all his interests; and he has endowed him with possessory feelings, by virtue of which he may acquire such a title to certain of these earthly blessings as that he may justly regard them as his in a sense in which they are not his neighbors. He may have something which he can call his own, and which from the motive of benevolence he can appropriate according to his own free choice in doing good to others.

Man now appears before us a being capable of acting the part of a true benefactor, of being merciful in some degree as his Father in heaven is merciful; and we have already seen that the facts which constitute him such enter into the scheme of systematic beneficence of which God is the author. As yet, however, we have only taken the narrowest and least attractive view of this glorious scheme. Not to the relief of physi-



cal suffering, and the promotion of temporal happiness has the sphere of human beneficence been limited. In the plan of infinite love for accomplishing the salvation of this fallen, sinful world, man has been assigned a part—the only part which he is capable of acting. Man could not satisfy the claims of insulted justice. This the infinite Son of God alone could do by the shedding of his own precious blood. Instantly he responded to the call of mercy, and pledged himself to make the sacrifice when the fullness of time should come. Man could not apply the atoning blood, and change the heart of his brother. This required the omnipotent energies of the Holy Spirit. Immediately they were in exercise for this object. Man's mind was too dark, unaided, to unfold the wondrous scheme of redemption. God spake himself, first by Moses and the prophets, partially, as best suited his gracious purposes; afterward he became incarnate, fulfilled the promise, himself set forth the truth in its fullness, laid the foundation of his Church, and commissioned a little band of faithful followers to preach to others the glad tidings which they had received from his own lips. The words of the commission, spoken after he had finished his work upon

the earth, and just before he reascended to heaven, are these: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." This is the part assigned to man, to spread the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. This is the field which God has opened for the exercise and cultivation of benevolence in the heart of his creature man. An immortality of blessedness and honor in behalf of his brother-man, is one of the motives by which it is intensified and exalted. Here is just the work which man needs; for it is adapted to stir the deepest sympathies of his heart, and to call forth the highest capabilities of his mind.

But to the grandest feature in this divine *system* of beneficence we have not yet alluded. "The first and great commandment is this. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto it, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It follows that their observance is at the same time man's highest duty and greatest privilege. It is the estab

lishment of the kingdom of God in his heart, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

We have thus far viewed the *system* which we are contemplating in its relation to the second of these commandments. But every part of it is also designed and adapted to secure obedience to the first, to call forth supreme love to God from the heart by bringing man into the closest union with him. Has God created man in his own image? He could not have placed him in a more endearing natural relation to himself. Has he redeemed man from the misery and degradation of his fall by the sacrifice of his only-begotten son, and thereby made him an heir of heaven? By no other means could he have manifested such love for him and placed him under such obligations to himself. Are there numerous wants in the nature of man? The beneficent Creator has himself placed them there, that he may bless him in supplying them. Has he instituted such relations among men that they are capable of loving each other? He himself sustains an infinitely nearer relation to these our neighbors and brethren and children than we do, and he loves them all infinitely more than it is

possible for us to love them. Have we the word of eternal life which we can give them? He gave us this word, he kindled in our hearts a desire to bestow it upon others, and he saves by means of it. Does he require us to give liberally of our possessions for the relief of the poor and the support of religion? The poor are his, and the cause of religion is his, and it is he who has made us possessors, and bestowed upon us all that we have. Every good thing upon earth was placed here by his bountiful hand as an expression of his love. May we be laborers together in the work of saving our fellow-men? This is God's work; he has appointed us to it; our fellow-men belong to him, and it is as his laborers, that we may be instrumental in their salvation. He does not assist us in saving others dear to us, but in whom he has no interest; but he allies us to himself in saving those who are the workmanship of his own hands, who were created in his own image, and whom his own blood has ransomed.

This beneficent scheme has not been provided for a favored few who are endowed with superior gifts and abundant wealth. It is true, only a limited number are called directly to the work of preaching the Gos-

pel, and some are very poor ; yet every one has his station of duty in the accomplishment of the great work. All may and ought to be living witnesses for the truth—"a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Besides, the poor with rare exceptions can give something. If it costs them greater self-denial than it would if they were rich, so much the greater is the profit which they derive ; for so much the more does it take them out of self, and contribute to the cultivation of a benevolent disposition. If there be those who are absolutely destitute of money, or of means to obtain it, even they will find opportunities to sacrifice to promote the happiness of their fellow-men and the glory of God ; and their struggling desires to aid in extending the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth may do more to expand their hearts than would the privilege of giving largely if they were rich.

But the number in Christendom is very small who cannot give something. Let the poor remember that the smallest sums, given in sincerity and cheerfulness, are no less acceptable to God than are the thousands cast into his treasury by the rich. Who has never been the possessor of a sum equal to two mites ? Yet our Lord regarded the two

mites of the poor widow as a greater contribution than the aggregate of all the large sums which the rich brought of their abundance. He estimated not by the bulk or quality of the coin, but by the greatness and purity of the motive, as determined by the sacrifice made. It is, however, quite probable that the real sacrifice not only measures the moral act of the contribution, but that in a great degree it measures also the magnitude of the results. The eye of man could not follow the widow's two mites in their direct influence as a benevolent contribution. Mingled with the thousands in the treasury, like the waters which the little stream pours into the ocean, they were instantly lost to human vision. But they were not lost to the omniscient eye of the great Benefactor. This small contribution was genuine, and was doubtless taken under his special care. It then became so much capital for the promotion of benevolence at compound interest forever. The little rill which there had its source, diffused so as to flow in a thousand directions, may by this time have contributed a fertilizing influence to the interests of humanity in all lands.

But there is a more important aspect to the poor widow's contribution. Who can

estimate the good resulting from her example as a rebuke to selfishness, and an encouragement to those who have hearts to do, but, like herself, are poor. That little star of influence which rose in Judea more than eighteen centuries ago, and at first shed only a few faint beams through a dense fog of unbelief upon a small number of minds, has from that time to the present been slowly and steadily rising, each succeeding year shining upon increasing numbers, and with an intenser radiance, and will continue to rise, and to enlarge its sphere, and to increase its brilliancy until, unobstructed, it shall pour its vertical rays upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Nor will it ever perish; for when time is no more, fixed in the bright firmament of the heavenly paradise, it will shine with eternal splendor. Thus the poor, as well as the rich, may share in the luxury of helping to give the word of life to their perishing fellow-men. All who have hearts to do so may aid in sending streams of beneficence to earth's remotest bounds, which will flow on with increasing power for evermore.

But let not the force of this system be neutralized as an exhibition of divine love by the absurd notion that God is in any degree

dependent upon man. He could speak the word, and every son of poverty would be rich ; all the blind would receive sight ; all the lame would leap for joy ; and all the sick, in perfected health and vigor, would rise, take up their beds, and walk. He might have made angels the ambassadors of his truth ; he might have caused every breeze to proclaim it ; he might have impressed it upon every leaf of the forest, upon every flower of the field, and upon every spire of grass, and have written it in characters of fire upon heaven's majestic arch ; or, discarding all such instrumentalities, he could himself address it to every man in an audible voice. The true explanation of the matter is this : Man must have a work to do in order that life may be a blessing, and the real value of life to him is determined by the character of the work in which he is employed. Without some sphere of action, the powers of an archangel would be a useless, unconscious possession. Man could not be benevolent like his Creator, whose image he bears, unless some object of benevolence were placed before him. He could not be beneficent if the necessary resources were not furnished him ; nor could he, in the highest sense, love with all the heart, except he were brought



into union with a being worthy of such love. How perfectly has this great want been met. That man may have an object of benevolence, he has been made his brother's keeper ; that he may have the means with which to do good to his brother, this earth has been formed and fitted up as a great almonry of its benevolent Creator, and man has been appointed his almoner to distribute the blessings with which it abounds ; that man may love supremely, God, whose infinite nature is love, after placing him under every other possible obligation, has taken him into union with himself. In the plenitude of his love he has planned and perfected the great system of beneficence which we have been contemplating—a system in all respects on a scale of grandeur which the infinite Mind alone could devise—that man, whom he has created in his own image, may also be like him in his character and conduct, and may be a partaker with him of the blessedness of beneficence.

Such is the scheme of systematic beneficence formed by the divine Benefactor in our behalf—such is the standard of Christian beneficence, and so great is our obligation of gratitude to conform to it: Freely, liberally, and systematically, our heavenly

Father gives to us; so ought we to give to others. "We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." So ought we cheerfully to give all which is required, though it be all we have, that our poor, benighted, perishing brethren may become rich in the Christian faith. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought (to be willing even) to lay down our lives for the brethren."

It is impossible to conceive a greater love than God has shown us. He has done all which he can do for our good. He even appeals to us, resting the integrity of his throne and his claim to our hearts upon our candid decision, whether he has left anything undone which our highest interests demanded. "Judge, I pray you," says he, "between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" So ought we, as a grateful return to God for his love and faithfulness to us, to the extent of our ability, to do good in every possible way to all those of his creatures of whose welfare he has in any respect made us keepers.

We cannot express our gratitude by bestowing any favor directly upon our Lord, for he himself is the giver of all. Therefore he points us to his poor, oppressed, and benighted, and assures us that he accepts good done even to the least of them all as done to himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But this survey of the divine system of beneficence, while it exhibits in the clearest light our indebtedness to God, and thus sets vividly before us one powerful motive to effort, also presents to us a general view of our whole subject. Pointing out to us our relation to this divine system, it advantageously discovers to us the complete system of motives with which Providence has furnished us, presented in a threefold view: 1. Of our relations to God; 2. Of our relations to the world; 3. Of our own interests. The intelligent reader will observe that, following this natural arrangement, the present and the next eight chapters urge upon us the claims of God; the three next following—the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth—the claims of the world; and that the last two chapters appeal to our own interests.

## CHAPTER III.

## BENEFICENCE A RELIGIOUS DUTY.

FROM the general view taken in the preceding chapter, it is now plain that our subject, far from being dry and speculative, is one full of interest to every Christian. No subject is of a nature to bring us more consciously into the presence of God, to exhibit to our minds brighter and more refreshing views of his character, and to stir the soul with deeper and holier emotions. Indeed, to have God in all our thoughts is the great essential to an understanding and appreciation of every part of this subject. None of the motives which it presents to us can be seen in all their greatness unless they are illumined by his radiant presence; nor can they be felt in all their power except they be accompanied by his sovereign voice. In describing the system of divine beneficence we have specially aimed to meet the former want. To meet the latter we appeal now to the stern motive of *religious duty*. God speaks to us not only as a Benefactor appeal-

ing to us as objects of his love, but from his peerless throne he addresses us as subjects of his rightful authority. Some have earnestly and reverently listened to his voice, and have responded with the promptness and cheerfulness of affectionate and loyal subjects. Comparatively speaking, however, we have reason to fear that the number is small, even of those who bear the Christian name, and love the Christian cause.

There is, indeed, generally a radical deficiency in the sentiment of the Church on this subject. Some, even, who unquestionably intend to do what they are convinced God requires of them, appear to regard contributions for charitable and religious purposes as so absolutely excluded from the list of duties as to be almost supererogatory. To pay their honest debts they would readily and cheerfully yield up every farthing, and make every exertion in their power; but in respect to the residue of their property, and their services after meeting the just claims of their creditors, they think they have the exclusive right to do as they please. But is this so? Has God no right to our property? Is there a limit to his authority over us? These pointed questions at once reveal a palpable inconsistency in this sentiment of

irresponsibleness in respect to our possessions. We can no more escape an imperious obligation, as we have "opportunity to do good unto all men," "to be rich in good works, ready to distribute," than we can annihilate ourselves as moral beings. No duty is enjoined in the Bible with greater distinctness than this, and scarcely any with greater frequency.

But we are not debating this subject with the Christian reader. We address with great confidence, especially those who are accustomed to respond promptly to the dictates of duty. We like to deal with such persons. If we are faithful to set duty before them, we can calculate what to depend upon from them. To them, at least, truth is sufficient. An attentive review of the subject cannot fail of leading them to the earnest conviction that beneficence is a duty as justly and sacredly enjoined upon them by the infinite Sovereign as is any precept of the decalogue.

But the writer ought to be candid as well as the reader, and this he will endeavor to remember. We freely admit that each man has a natural right to that of which he has honestly become the possessor. No other man, however extreme may be his destitu-

tion, can, without incurring the guilt of theft, take the smallest portion of it against his consent; nor is it the province of any other man to dictate to him how he shall appropriate it. We admit further, that the common sweeping assumption that man holds his property *only* as a steward needs qualification. Every one instinctively perceives an impropriety, if he does not detect a fallacy in it. By endowing us with possessory feelings, the Creator has himself given us such a title to the property which he has entrusted to us that we properly feel that there is a sense in which it is ours; but this is not the case with mere stewards. If we give a dollar to relieve a suffering neighbor, it is an expression of our own benevolence. We justly feel that it is a voluntary gift on our part, and the receiver recognizing it as such, returns to us an expression of gratitude. Now if we were mere stewards, though we might be conscious of having faithfully discharged a trust, we could not, in any sense, feel that we had acted benevolently; and the receiver, instead of thanking us, would only request us to express his thanks to our employer.

But while we readily grant that, in a distinct sense, man holds his property as a pos-

essor, it is none the less true that he holds it as a steward of God, and as strictly as though he were only a steward. That man is a possessor is a matter of universal experience. Revelation does not, as some seem to suppose, contradict this. On the contrary, it constantly recognizes man as a possessor; but it also teaches, that in addition to this, he is a steward of God, and that not only over his property, but equally in respect to every endowment of body and mind. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing." "The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

This twofold relation which man sustains to his property has a high practical importance. Its recognition is indispensable to



clear the subject of the vagueness which hangs around it, and to call into lively exercise the benevolent affections, and give to their action the vigor, and constancy, and propriety of moral principle. To degrade man to a mere steward would be to dry up the fountain of compassion in his heart, and render him incapable of beneficence; for "the very nature of this virtue is to do good freely and willingly with its own." Besides, man's trust and consequent responsibility would then be comparatively small. He is more emphatically a steward because he is a possessor. Even his title to his property is in the handwriting of God, and it is subordinate to his absolute and eternal claim upon it, and is held on condition of faithfulness. It has been conferred for the purpose of qualifying man for his high responsibility as his brother's keeper; and with the gracious design, by giving dignity to the trust and enlarging his moral freedom, to enable him to profit the more by his stewardship.

Thus we perceive that the fact that we have a right to our property—that we are possessors as well as stewards—renders us capable of sacrifices for the good of others, and of the duty of offering them freely and

liberally, enjoined upon us by the Most High. While then we have not the exclusive right to do as we please with our property and our services, we must take the entire responsibility of applying both as stewards of God. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Let it be specially observed that beneficence is uniformly enjoined as strictly a *religious* duty. It is obvious, from the teachings of Scripture, that the primary design of God in requiring sacrifices of property is not the relief of the suffering. If this were the only object, he could easily accomplish it immediately without any of our assistance. But his gracious design is our own moral improvement, by constantly reminding us of our absolute dependence upon him for every blessing, by awakening gratitude in our hearts for his goodness, and by cultivating in us a spirit of benevolence and of self-denial. The sacrifices required under the ancient dispensations had reference also to man's guilt. These have been superseded by the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God. But the Christian, as well as the Jew, is required to bring his offerings to the Lord. Their relig-

ious nature remains unchanged. The purpose to which they should be appropriated is a secondary consideration, depending upon the time and the circumstances.

This is sometimes strangely overlooked by Christians. How often is the missionary appeal addressed almost exclusively to the sympathies, and how often do we hear prayers the chief aim of which seems to be to convert God to the sinner. It seems to be forgotten that God feels any interest in the welfare of the fallen sons of Adam; that their salvation is his own cause; that "he so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All the love which the hearts of men and angels can contain, is infinitely less than that which God has manifested toward every individual of the human race. It does not become us, then, to absorb ourselves in mere sympathy with our fellow-men, and to pray for them as though we were mediators before God in their behalf. We ought, indeed, to sympathize with them, but not as though we alone cared for their souls. All such sympathy is blind, frenzied, and powerless for good. Nor have we a right to expect that efforts prompted by it

will be attended by much success, for the twofold reason that they are themselves unnatural, and that the motive is essentially defective. If we would secure the blessing of God upon our labors, we must labor in his service, and our prayer must be that he will glorify his own name in the use of our labors.

The following are a few of the many passages which express the religious nature of this duty. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh!" "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for . . . I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "As ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of

the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give: not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Thus our subject, in the outset, appeals to the most powerful of all motives—that of religious obligation. But this motive is also the broadest and most definite in its application. God has presented to us the proper objects of beneficence. He has enjoined liberality in their support, and he has prescribed system in our efforts. These requirements will receive attention in subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PRESCRIBED OBJECTS OF BENEFICENCE.

To determine the proper objects of beneficence we appeal again "to the law and to the testimony." Here we find that with equal distinctness we are required to contribute to the relief of the poor and the support of religion. Under the Mosaic dispensation the laws were specific in respect to both these objects; and these afford us an unequivocal index to duties imperiously devolving upon us, similar to those which they originally pointed out to the Jews.

But these duties are also inculcated in the plainest manner in every part of the Bible. And let it be particularly observed that they are not limited to mere pecuniary sacrifices. No one can discharge his full responsibility by giving his part when called upon. If all should stop with this the whole matter would be universally neglected. Besides, real sacrifices are required; but in many cases mere giving can scarcely be regarded as a sacrifice. To this earnest personal effort should be added, though to a

considerable extent the mode of effort must be determined by the particular stations of duty which we are called to occupy. No matter, however, what the station may be, the word of God requires beneficence in the full import of the term. Let us first consider—

*The duty of beneficence to the poor.* “If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with thee.” “Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.” “The righteous considereth the cause of the poor.” “Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him.” “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” “Give alms of such things as ye have.” “Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith?” “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye.”

Let it not be inferred that the provision which is made for the poor at public expense can supersede individual responsibility. As well might the whole duty of personal religion be superseded by making religion a state institution. That the state should provide for the poor under present circumstances is undoubtedly wise. The Jews were required to support the poor; but they were required to do this freely, as a sacred obligation to God, and in the true spirit of charity toward their unfortunate brethren. Upon the same principles every man should now give his part, and act his part in the public support of the poor. Indeed, when, as in this country, the people control the state, the action on the part of a majority, at least, is strictly voluntary.

But it will not do to trust this matter wholly to state action. To abandon charity to the mere force of law is to destroy her. Freedom belongs to her as an essential attribute, and to rob her of it is to take her life. She acts at great disadvantage when in any measure subjected to the restraints of human law. Let it be borne in mind that the assessments upon the property of the Jew were made by God himself, and that he appointed no human executors of



the laws by which he prescribed them. Even these laws, however, so far as they consisted in specifications of the form of dispensing to the poor, seem not to have had the elements of permanency. They were needed because the law of love had been obliterated from the heart of man, and as a means of making straight the way of the incarnate Son of God, who in the fullness of time perfectly exemplified that great law in his life and death. Human statutes for the support of the poor, then, should not be regarded as adapted to secure the highest ends of charity, but rather as a necessity—perhaps a temporary one—in view of the feeble influence which the law of love has yet gained in the heart of man, and of his hesitating allegiance to God. In the minds of most persons there is a feeling of generosity toward the poor, and a natural shrinking from scenes of suffering, which, combined with various prudential motives, render them willing to give what they call their part toward their support if they can be saved the trouble of looking after them personally; and it is certainly better to call to the aid of these comparatively impotent and very inconstant motives the strength and system of legislation, than that the poor

shall be left to suffer. Still, the sooner this foreign aid can be safely dispensed with the better. Its influence, like that of a mercenary army, is corrupting and dangerous. It effects an unnatural separation between the giver and receiver, sundering the twofold bond of compassion on the part of the one, and gratitude on the part of the other, by which the benevolent Creator would bind them in indissoluble union, and bless them both with the true riches of the heart. It is an early part of the work of the Church, wherever it is practicable, to restore this bond by rescuing charity from the grasp of the law, and providing for the poor by the free-will offerings of those who are actuated by Christian benevolence and a sense of religious duty. Blessed will be the day when, by this divinely-appointed means, this work shall be consummated.

Nothing would be gained, but much lost, by a repeal of the laws providing for the poor. It would be to reverse the natural order of progress, which is not to destroy such existing institutions as, upon the whole, are good, but to improve them to the utmost, and, in addition, to build up others which are better. For a long time, some who have property will not act at all in behalf

of the needy, unless they are permitted to act in this convenient way. Let the Christian rejoice that they are disposed to act at all, and heartily coöperate with them; but instead of stopping with this, let him, as a consistent follower of Christ, also exhibit to the world a style of beneficence as much superior to it as religious principle is to motives of prudence, and as the steady flame of Christian love is to the flickering spark of natural generosity, or the uncertain glow of mere sympathy.

The Scripture precepts quoted make it the first duty of the Church to care for the poor "who are of the household of faith." The Christian is brought into a peculiar and most endearing alliance to his brother-Christian. They are of one household—"the household of faith." Are there any relations of friendship or of consanguinity which are nearer than this? If it is unnatural to leave a parent, a brother, a sister, or a child to escape from starvation and nakedness by taking shelter in a poor-house while it is possible to provide for them from our own resources, is it not equally unnatural thus to neglect those who are of the same Christian household with ourselves? He who has passed from death unto life finds

an answer to these questions in his own love to the brethren. It is natural as well as Scriptural to give a preference in our benefactions to the poor of Christ's household, and "so much the more" should this be observed, "because the world will love its own, and them only."

But the Church is also commanded as she has opportunity to do good unto all men. "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them," we are authorized to regard as among the brightest evidences of the divinity of the Christian faith. Indeed, this declaration of our Lord is expressive of the very genius of Christianity. As has often been said, it begins among the lower strata of society, and, having thus laid a firm foundation, works upward. It removes the causes of poverty and ignorance, and elevates their victims to prosperity and influence. The poor, then, are the special trust of the Church. To them is her first mission. But to preach the Gospel successfully to the poor, their confidence must be gained, and their sympathies enlisted, by active benevolence in caring for their temporal as well as spiritual wants. In this manner it is the duty of the Church, to the extent of her ability, to save the worthy poor from the dreaded necessity of bidding adieu

to the genial influences of home, and casting themselves as a last resort upon the hireling charity of an alms-house. When the Church generally, heeding the voice of God, and constrained by the love of Christ, shall prefer this labor of love to efforts, whether successful or unsuccessful, to hoard up the treasures of earth, then shall "her righteousness go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

We have dwelt so long upon the duty of beneficence to the poor from a suspicion that its importance even relatively is underrated. The interests of time, it is true, admit of no comparison with the interests of eternity; but the sovereign Ruler has as solemnly enjoined beneficence in the promotion of the former as of the latter, and however this may appear to us, we may be assured that he has done it wisely. He needs no advice from us, and the economy of his benevolence can receive no improvements at our hands.

We pass now to consider *the duty of beneficence in sustaining the institutions of religion*. We have already observed that this duty is one of the fundamental principles upon which the Jewish ecclesiastical system was based, and that this proves that its obli-

gation is universal. The historical parts of the Bible also afford us clear intimations that it was required from the earliest ages of the world. But to these evidences, though of undoubted authority, we need now only allude; for the commands of the Gospel are as plain as those of the law.

This duty is implied in the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." This command does not, of course, require all to go forth themselves as ministers of the Gospel; but it does make it the great duty of the whole Church to consecrate her talents and property to the work of spreading the glad tidings of salvation throughout the earth. This is so plain that remarks would rather obscure than add to its force.

Again, God has called and anointed special laborers to the work of preaching the Gospel. But "how can they preach except they be sent?" They must, indeed, be sent of God; and true to this fact, he will do his part by supplying them with spiritual graces. But they must be sent by the Church too. It is by sending them that the Church is to go forth by her influence into all the world in obedience to the command of Christ. Upon her, then, clearly devolves the duty

of providing for the temporal wants of the laborers.

But the precepts of the Gospel are specific upon this subject, as much so as is the great commission itself: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." "The laborer is worthy of his hire." The entire force of the requirements made to the Jews in respect to the support of the Levites and the worship of the temple has by the authority of inspiration been transferred to the conscience of the Church, as expressive of her duty to support the ministry. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power: but suffer all things; lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*"

Such language as the above ought forever to hush the unjust and ungenerous murmurs which are still occasionally heard from Churches against taking responsibility in the support of their pastors, and forever to annihilate the patronizing spirit in which a meager allowance is still sometimes doled out to them. To the honor of the Church, be it said, these disgraces are fast disappearing. The faithful laborer is not an object of charity; "he is worthy of his hire." Nor does the responsibility of soliciting and collecting his dues devolve upon him. This duty also belongs to the Churches, and should be attended to by them thoroughly and promptly, that their pastors, relieved from all anxiety in respect to their support, and cheered and strengthened by the perpetual assurance of the coöperation of those to whom



they minister, may devote their undivided energies to the one work of gathering souls into the Messiah's kingdom, and building them up in the faith which was once delivered to the saints.\*

But what has the duty of a Christian congregation to support their own minister to do with beneficence? "This," says the honorable reader, "is providing for ourselves, and discharging an obligation which we incur voluntarily." True, if you receive the ambassador of God as your minister, listen to his preaching, expect him to visit you in affliction, to attend your funeral, or those of your loved ones when death shall enter your dwelling, and to labour for your spiritual welfare and that of your family, you are under a direct obligation to compensate his services—an obligation into which you have entered by your own choice. In this view of the subject he is your laborer, as really such as are those whom you employ to cultivate

\* It is not to be inferred that the Christian pastor has never a duty to perform in this matter. The example of Paul proves the contrary. It well accords with the relation of the pastor to his people that he should advise in respect to the plan of operation. In new fields of labor especially, the people properly look to the religious teacher as their guide in respect to this as well as other kindred duties.

your fields, to tend your flocks, to prepare food for your family, or to administer to their bodily wants in sickness. But while he who ministers to you and your family in spiritual things is your laborer, he is none the less a laborer of God; and it is this fact, together with the command of God, from which your obligation to see that he is furnished with the means of support, derives its chief strength.

It is not, however, merely for your interests and those of the family who of right look to you to furnish them with the preaching of the Gospel and pastoral watch-care, that the Christian minister is called to labor. God has sent him to preach to multitudes around you as well as to yourself and your family. It is their duty to coöperate with you in his support; but by some of them it is probably neglected. Hence it becomes necessary for you to do more than your just proportion as a member of society; and that which is required of you because of the neglect of others, is toward them a benevolent contribution. God sends his laborer as a missionary to the heathen around you, and calls upon you as his steward to sustain him. Still, toward your Christian pastor, whatever you give and do is simple justice. It

is for the highest interests of yourself and family to have his services, whatever sacrifice it may cost you.

All this is so plain as to admit of no controversy. But it would be by no means just to infer, that in a community where all but a few poor Christians refuse to do anything, it is always the duty of those few to assume the entire responsibility of supporting a minister and his family. This, in some cases, would be impossible. Yet there are no exceptions to the rule that the Christian laborer must, by some means, have a support. If it were wise to do so God might, indeed, make a part or all his laborers so that they should have no wants; or he could command the clouds to rain the corn of heaven upon them, furnish their bodies with garments which would wax not old throughout the term of their ministry, send them down a habitation from the celestial world, and as a substitute for books, himself communicate to them all knowledge essential to the highest success of their calling. But this Infinite Wisdom has not seen to be best. The wants of those who are called to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, and of their families, are similar to those of others.

Plainly, then, those Churches which are

unable fully to support a preacher, should not expect his full services unless they are aided by missionary contributions from abroad. If what they are able to give, combined with such assistance as they can secure, will afford him only a partial support, still they can justly ask only a corresponding amount of labor from him. It may be his duty to labor a part of the time in connection with another Church, or to supply the deficiency in his support by working with his hands as Paul did. It cannot be his duty to starve himself and his family, nor to involve himself in debt.

But however poor a Church may be, if they require the full services of the preacher, it is no longer a question what their duty is. They actually take the responsibility of seeing that, by some means, he is furnished with a reasonable support, even though to do so they must "sell their possessions." They may have mistaken their duty in taking the responsibility, but this cannot affect their present duty of discharging it now that it has been assumed. Nor does this duty devolve upon everybody in general and nobody in particular. The responsibility is individual, and is limited only by ability and influence, though, of course, it rests

more immediately upon the leading members of the Church. This conclusion cannot be evaded, and no honest man, not to say Christian, desires to evade it.

It is a matter of great rejoicing that the principles contended for in these remarks are now recognized in so many of our Churches. They are certainly acted upon in all those Churches which enjoy steady prosperity, and this must continue to be the case so long as a just God rules. Let them also be adopted by such Churches as have been accustomed to excuse themselves from duty on the plea of inability, and one of the causes of their inability will speedily disappear. Our lay brethren will not ask us to waste a paragraph in apology for these plain words. The duty to which they relate is as sacred as any which the Church owes to God; and, moreover, it bears so fundamental a relation to all the great enterprises of beneficence for the world's salvation, that, in general, more than in proportion to its neglect will be the neglect of them all.

But the duty of Christians is not limited to the support of their own pastors, to paying those laborers whom they employ to administer spiritual things directly to them. God requires the Church to adopt all his

laborers as hers, and to hold up their hands by her hearty coöperation in providing for their temporal wants. Her duty to do this is implied in the fact that they are called of God, and it cannot in the least be affected by the quarter of the globe to which he sends them. In admitting that they are God's laborers, the Church admits her duty to sustain them, and to do it in the same spirit of unreserved sacrifice which he expects of them.

Nothing can be farther from the truth than that none are required to sacrifice except those whose immediate duty it is to preach the Gospel to the destitute and the benighted. They must, indeed, discharge their duty—do all they can—even though the Church neglect them; but they are as really entitled to a support as are other laborers. A woe is upon them if they preach not the Gospel; and a woe is upon the Churches if they perform not the part just as imperiously demanded of them. The great commission is addressed to the entire Church militant, and makes it as distinctly the duty of all Christians to place everything—time, talents, property—upon the altar of consecration to Christ and his cause, as of those who are called to the

immediate work of preaching, whether in Christendom or heathendom.

Indeed, God requires all his people to be a united band of laborers in his service in the great work of restoring the world to himself. The only distinction which he has made is, that he has appointed them to different stations, and has assigned to each that part of the work which he is most capable of performing, and which is best suited to his own wants as a probationer for heaven.

In the present state of things it cannot be otherwise than that the different stations of Christian duty should be very dissimilar in the amount of suffering involved in them. But the more favored in this respect, instead of taking advantage of their stations to satiate themselves with everything the heart can desire, and to exalt themselves above their suffering brethren, thus making their already heavy burdens still heavier by adding the weight of their own heartlessness, should rather by every means in their power seek to equalize the burdens. They should relieve them of all burden with regard to the means of temporal support, and by heartily and practically expressing their sympathy, aid them in bearing those bur-

dens which are unavoidable in their work. This is required by mandates as explicit as any which have been issued from the eternal throne. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." No faithful minister of Christ desires the Church to bestow upon him a princely revenue. But is it anything more than reasonable—is it more than obedience to these divine precepts, that those whose responsibilities are lighter, and whose trials are comparatively small, should be willing to provide for their brethren who are called to endure hardships and to discharge severer duties, even more liberally than they do for themselves?

The duty of the Church to support those who are called to the work of preaching, obviously implies the duty of providing for them and their families when age, or disease, or accident disqualifies them for service. Indeed, in reference to such the duty is emphasized by additional considerations. Those laborers who are in health and vigor, if neglected by the Church, can devote a portion of their time to some other employment which will secure them a support;



but to the disabled this is impossible. Again, it is no longer a question whether the Church will approve of these men as Christian laborers. She has accepted them, and their work is done. She has thus virtually agreed to see that they are amply provided for, and they have a right to expect this from her.

This duty also implies an obligation to erect in proper localities suitable Church edifices, and, after they are erected, to keep them neat and in good repair. It further requires us to supply our families with religious reading, and, by our money and influence, to aid in sustaining libraries for the use of our Sunday schools and congregations. Finally, it implies the duty of coöperating in all such philanthropic and educational institutions as are the offspring of Christianity and are auxiliary to its promotion. These are all matters of importance; but we need not dwell on them here. We allude to them only to point them out as objects of conscience toward God.

## CHAPTER V.

## LIBERALITY REQUIRED.

ON how liberal a scale does God require us to give for the promotion of his cause? For light upon this question we will first revert to the requirements made of the Jews. These will aid us to form an idea of what liberality is in the eye of the divine benefactor. They are a perpetual memorial that he expects large sacrifices of his people. Now, if we add the tithes and various offerings and benefactions constantly required of the Jew, we shall find, as others have estimated, that they amount to full *one-fourth*, if not *one-third* of his entire income, and all this, let it be remembered, exclusive of the extraordinary outlays for the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem—the amount expended upon the latter alone, at the lowest estimate, exceeding the cost of all the Christian Churches ever erected in this nation.

To many persons, these demands upon the Jew appear so far above the possible

standard of duty to them as to afford but little instruction. But what ground is there for such a conclusion? Are our privileges inferior to those of the Jews? or has God dealt less bountifully with us as a people than with them? Certainly not. Are the calls of beneficence less numerous now than they were in their times? The reverse is the case. The systematic charities required of the Jews were healthful in their influence, and a preventive of pauperism. Besides, the way was not then prepared for foreign missionary enterprises. The field of their required charities was circumscribed by the narrow limits of their own territory. But we live in the perfect dispensation of the Gospel, and the field of our beneficence is the world. Almost every part of the earth is open for the spread of saving truth. More than six hundred millions of our fellow-men are perishing for lack of the bread of life, which God has committed to us as his stewards in great abundance. Now, in view of these circumstances, shall we claim that the standard of liberality to the Christian Church should be below that required of the Jews? Some, indeed, should not be expected to give a third of their income. There may be those who cannot, in

general, consistently give more than a tenth. But the rich can give half, and in many cases ought to give all that remains after economically meeting their current expenses. Many have already acquired too much, and ought to give a part of the principal. Upon the whole, then, instead of regarding a third as above the true standard, must we not rather conclude that a prosperous Church should, upon an average, give even more than this?

But the Christian is not left to mere inference in respect to this duty. The Gospel is not, indeed, specific with regard to the amount or proportion which should actually be appropriated to charitable and religious purposes; but neither does it cancel any claim of the law upon man's possessions. On the contrary, it sums up, perfects, and enforces them all in the great law of love, of which the religious charities required of the Jews were only a limited application. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—this is the Gospel standard of beneficence; a standard which, like every other part of the Gospel system, is of universal adaptation. We enjoy greater freedom, but commensurate with our freedom is the

greatness of our trust. We are so much the more responsible stewards.

As every feature of contrast between the two dispensations would lead us to expect, the standard of Christian charity is uniformly placed higher than the Jewish. Was the Jew commanded to open his hand wide to his poor brother? The command of our Lord is, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Was the former expected to give a third of his income? To the Christian upon whom the calls of charity are more numerous, when his entire income is insufficient to respond to them, the distinct command of Him who spake with authority is, "Sell that ye have and give alms." Broader still is the command, "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful." Similar precepts, emphasized in the strongest manner by promises and threatenings, abound in the teachings of our Saviour and of his inspired apostles. To enforce this duty, and to encouragement in its performance, in one instance St. Paul devotes two entire chapters—2 Cor. viii, ix.

Then, as the crowning evidence of our duty upon this subject, and a concentration of the motive power which lies in it, we have this great law of Christian charity per-

fectly embodied in the character of our Lord, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Here is the standard of our duty in the clear light of a perfect and authoritative example—an example, too, which as Christians we profess to adopt. To this the inspired apostles often appeal. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Christ has also explicitly commanded us to follow him. "If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Are these, then, the terms of Christian discipleship? Yes, these are the unqualified terms prescribed by the Master himself, reiterated with the most solemn emphasis, and uniformly and uncompromisingly demanded of all who desired to become his followers. To the rich young man who asked him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I

may have eternal life?" his final prescript was, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." "But," some are ready to ask, "must we actually dispossess ourselves of everything which we call our own?" Possibly not; but you must be willing to do so for Christ's sake, and it may even be demanded of you. When our property is an impediment to our salvation, or to the work which the Master would assign to us, or is specially needed by the exigencies of his cause, he requires that it be all appropriated immediately. Doubtless some such reasons existed in the case of the young man referred to. But in every case He requires us to forsake all that we have by acknowledging our possessions as absolutely his, and by employing them freely in his service to the full extent to which they are needed to secure the highest success of his cause.

Thus, obviously, the twelve disciples understood the requirements of their Lord. It is improbable that any of them literally abandoned their property, or even appropriated it all immediately to purposes of charity. Subsequently to their call it incidentally appears that Peter's family, including his

wife's mother, resided in his own house, that he had a ship of his own, and that John's means were so ample that our Lord committed to him the care of his own mother. There was probably no occasion for an immediate outlay of all their possessions. But whatever the disciples had they held as stewards of Christ, ever subject to his disposal.

Such were also the views and practice of the primitive Christians generally who received instruction directly from the lips of our Lord and the apostles. Constrained by the love of Christ they acknowledged entire allegiance to him, regarding it as only their reasonable service to devote their energies, their property, and their lives to his cause.

How nobly did the infant Church at Jerusalem respond to the claims of their Lord at the time of the first great ingathering of souls! No wild scheme of a reorganization of society excited them to extravagance; but, to meet an urgent want of their common Redeemer, they came forward freely, prompted by the law of love enthroned in their hearts, and "showed their faith by their works," by appropriating not their income only, but their lands and houses. "As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the



prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet : and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." When the Christians at Jerusalem, under the violent persecution to which they were exposed, were bereft of their property and reduced to extreme want, then in turn other Churches showed toward them a liberality similar to that which they had exhibited at the time of the Pentecostal revival. Of the Macedonian Churches, though "in a great trial of affliction," St. Paul declares that "the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For," he adds, "to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves ; praying as with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

In presenting the example of the self-sacrificing zeal of the Macedonian Christians to the Church at Corinth, the apostle exhorts them also to abound in the grace of liberality. But throughout his stirring exhortation to them, extending through the eighth and ninth chapters of his second epistle, his words are those of encourage-

ment and expectation. He assures them of his great confidence in them, and acknowledges their readiness of mind to respond heartily to the call of charity and duty when he first introduced the subject to them a year before. "For as touching the ministering to the saints," says he, "it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many."

Nor did this characteristic disappear at the death of the apostles. As history abundantly testifies, the Church was distinguished by the same zeal for centuries. Examples illustrative of her benevolent spirit brighten every page of her history.

Even in that long night of centuries during which the energies of the Church were repressed on every side by hierarchal power, though much of her zeal was morbid, fanatical, and misdirected, her offerings were vastly greater in proportion to her means than are those of the Church at the present day.

But why is this? Why with these clear evidences of duty before her—with the inspiring example of her divine Master, and

this bright cloud of witnesses shining upon her—with an immortal crown for her sure reward—with her abundant resources, and the long-bolted doors of a perishing world thrown open, and numerous volunteers ready as soon as the means shall be furnished to enter with the bread of life—why in view of all this is the Church so deficient in her benefactions? Is she willfully deaf to the voice of God? Has she resolved to repudiate the law of love? Has she suffered covetousness to usurp the throne of her heart? No; we will not believe it. Little less than this seems to be true of some whose names are enrolled in the records of the Church; and this perhaps is not strange now that Christianity has so wrought itself into the deepest convictions of mankind that a profession of it in some form is popular. All such Church-members, except they repent, wait the certain doom of unfaithful stewards. But Christ has yet a people on the earth, yea, a greater number than ever before, and those too who will show themselves, as eminently as Christians of any age, “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

There is no occasion for despair. In a great degree the deficiency of the Church is traceable to natural causes, and these can

and ought to be removed. The truth is, a false discipline has subjected the Church to false habits. For ages that which she should have been allowed to give as free-will offerings, guided by her reason and conscience, was extorted from her by the fear of crafty priests, who assumed to monopolize the Redeemer's merits, and threatened with the fires of purgatory all who refused to purchase salvation at such a price as they were disposed to demand. And when, at length, the Church escaped from this unnatural bondage, vagueness in her sense of responsibility, in respect to her property, was but a natural result. The Scripture motives to beneficence, which should have been kept constantly before her, had so long been crowded out of view that they were among the least known of all the revelations of the Gospel; and it is not very singular that the process has been slow by which these motives have been recovered, and in all their harmony and power placed anew before the mind of the Church. We venture the opinion that this work, which devolves upon the guiding minds of the Church, has yet been but very imperfectly performed. Something, however, has been done, and not in vain, as is proved by the fruits.

From the time that the Church began to throw off the yoke of hierarchal power with which a corrupt priesthood had burdened her, and to bring her offerings to the treasury of the Lord, influenced by a calm sense of duty, and prompted by the impulses of Christianity, her missionary zeal has been steadily advancing, and, as a whole, at a rapidly-increasing ratio.

Examples of what may without profanation be called Christian liberality are multiplying. Mr. Samuel Budgett, of England,—“The Successful Merchant,”—though naturally possessed of a strong passion for gain, in the earlier part of his career repeatedly gave away his last shilling; and in his subsequent prosperity giving became a part of his regular work, his contributions often amounting weekly to hundreds of dollars.

A noble example is also that of the late Amos Lawrence, of Boston. Entering upon life without property, and upon business as a clerk with a small salary, he was enabled by his own honest industry and enterprise before his death to give to the cause of benevolence, in its various forms, the princely sum of seven hundred thousand dollars.

We might, if appropriate, mention a score of living examples of Christian men who, by

giving liberally from the first, have in the order of Providence been eminently successful in business, and are now giving nearly or quite their entire income. May God speed the day when this shall be the rule instead of the exception !

But it is not from the abundance of the rich only that the benevolent contributions of the Church are annually increasing, but much more from the gifts, generally greater in proportion to their means, of those who are yet in humble circumstances. These attract not the eye of the world ; but they are very precious in the sight of the Lord.

Thus we have great occasion for encouragement and courage. Within about a century all the great enterprises of the Church for the evangelization of the world have had their birth ; and already their results exceed the most sanguine expectations of their early friends. Hardly even a professed Christian can now be found who is so antiquated as to be affected by the narrow prejudices which at first so extensively and violently obstructed the missionary movement ; and, within a brief period, the contributions of the Church for the Missionary, Bible, Sunday school, and Tract societies, have increased tenfold.

But the liberality of the Church is yet far below the standard of duty. Her contributions need to be increased tenfold more. She seems not to know what to do when urged to bring her benefactions up to the plain teachings of the Gospel. Though made to see that this is her duty, still it seems utterly impracticable. But this is not so. The commandments of God are not grievous to those who observe them all. If we attempt to conform to the Gospel standard of liberality without method, or by a method of our own invention, we shall undoubtedly find it hard ; but if we avail ourselves of the method which God has prescribed, the difficulties will disappear. What the divinely-prescribed method is, we shall endeavor to answer in subsequent chapters ; and we invite the reader's careful and candid attention.

## CHAPTER VI.

## SYSTEM REQUIRED.

WE have already seen that a liberal beneficence is enjoined in the Bible upon all as a religious duty, that its objects are divinely prescribed, and that the purpose of God in requiring it is nothing less than our own eternal salvation, and the restoration of the world to himself. But yet another requirement claims our attention, and one practically the weightiest of all; because upon an observance of it depends the probability and even possibility of fully observing those previously considered. *It is made our duty to be systematic in our beneficent efforts.*

This duty is clearly taught in the laws of God requiring beneficence of the Jews. We defer, as more apposite in another place, the inquiry how far these laws themselves are obligatory upon us. There can be no doubt, however, that the principles which characterize them are immutable. Now system is a principle entering into each distinct enactment. The Jews were not simply required to give, and for particular objects,



and with liberality ; but they were required to give a portion of all their income, to give before making any appropriations for their own use, and, as the minimum, to give a fixed proportion. From this, then, the Christian may at least learn the duty of system in beneficence.

But this duty is also directly inculcated in various passages of Scripture unquestionably designed for the whole Church. Prov. iii, 9: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." Lev. xxvii, 30: "All the tithe of the land is the Lord's." 1 Cor. xvi, 2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as the Lord hath prospered him." These precepts will receive particular attention in distinct chapters. We quote them now simply to prove the general duty of system in our benefactions, and this appears on the very surface of their teachings.

Having thus shown that the religious obligation of system in beneficence rests on the immovable basis of the published law of God, we invite the reader's attention in the remainder of this chapter to the harmony of this requirement with the expectations of reason and the teachings of the unwritten volume of divine Providence.

We observe first that system in all things is a universal dictate of reason. Every process of reason is systematic. Hence, to disregard system is to be untrue to the noblest endowment of the human mind. To undertake any work, then, without system is unworthy of man as a rational being. But if reason requires system in the humblest of callings in life, how much more in the sublime work of Christian beneficence in the salvation of the world.

Again : this requirement accords with the bestowments of Providence upon us. God gives to us systematically. As we have already seen, his whole economy is a vast scheme of beneficence, system within system, every part so adjusted as to operate with perfect regularity, and in harmony with every other part. It is true, sin has temporarily disturbed the operations of this glorious system of divine beneficence. Man has sometimes suffered from the unfeeling avarice of his brother, and oftener from his own indolence. Occasionally scarcity has been experienced by a nation. Yet the Bible authorizes the affirmation, that not in a single instance has man been permitted to suffer want not the result of his own fault, except it were seen to be in harmony with

that comprehensive plan which regards his eternal well-being. Never does the infinite Benefactor forget our returning wants. He always supplies them, unless by withholding he can accomplish for us a disciplinary purpose more sublimely beneficent. Probably, however, there has not been a year since the creation which has not been so crowned with goodness as to afford a sufficiency for the wants of all. "God has never left himself without witness in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness;" and he has declared that "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Momently he upholds us by his power, and invigorates us with his air, and gladdens our hearts by his tender regard for our minutest wants. With comparatively rare exceptions, daily he spreads our tables with food convenient for us, and prospers the lawful work of our hands or our heads, and nightly blesses us with undisturbed repose. Weekly he gives us a Sabbath of rest from toil, and permits us to assemble in his own house, and share with the angels in the honors of worshipping him, and in the richer manifesta-

tions of his love. Yea, oft as we peruse his word he addresses to us the counsels of his wisdom ; and oft as we lift our hearts to him in prayer, he opens the windows of heaven and showers upon us the blessings of his grace. The circling seasons each come laden with peculiar blessings. Goodness and mercy, with a fresh supply for every step, attend us in all our journey from infancy to the close of our earthly pilgrimage. Now the lesson here inculcated is plain. In bestowing upon us systematically, our heavenly Father teaches us to be systematic in discharging the duty which he requires of us to distribute a portion to our needy brethren. If we would fully discharge this duty, it is really the most convenient to give as systematically as we receive. This is also the dictate of gratitude. Besides, by requiring us to be merciful as he is merciful, he has made his example infinitely authoritative.

Again : this duty is implied in the fact that the calls of beneficence are systematic. These calls are from God, and they are as systematic as his providential care over the world. We have before stated the prescribed objects of beneficence to be the relief of the poor and the support of religion.

Now divine law has determined the fre-

quency and measure of the wants of the poor, and has made their recurrence as regular as the succession of day and night. If we can supply them for a month in advance, that may sometimes do; but to neglect them for a month, because after that we could attend to their wants more conveniently, would be to doom them to perish.

This lesson of Providence is so obvious and so important, that probably it was never disregarded in the provisions of civil government for the poor. And shall the Church be less observant of its teachings? As certainly as that Christianity shall continue its career of triumph in the earth, the Church shall one day take this whole work of charity out of the hands of the state. She is not yet able to do this; but what she can do she can and ought to do in a manner responsive to the calls of Providence.

So also the cause of religion is systematic in its wants. Those who are appointed to the work of preaching, whether in Christian or in heathen lands, have daily wants similar to those of other men; and, besides, they are constantly subject to expenses peculiar to their station. If it seemed wise in the sight of God miraculously to feed his ministers and their families with manna for the

first few weeks after entering upon their stations, or to let them down chariots from heaven, that at the close of each day's toil they might ascend to celestial mansions, the Churches might, without culpability, defer to provide them with means of support until they had actually become indebted to them for a few weeks' service. But with facts as they are, certainly no Church whose attention has been kindly and faithfully called to the subject, unless from absolute necessity, can do this without disregarding the calls of God upon her, and incurring his displeasure.

Again: the duty of system in beneficence is implied in its superior efficiency. System is indispensable to success in every enterprise. It is one of the chief characteristics which distinguish successful from unsuccessful men in every calling in life. Without system, men of the largest natural endowments, though industrious and persevering, permanently effect but little. With system, men of only ordinary natural powers have made the grandest achievements for immortality. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that system multiplies the power of man a hundredfold. It secures the full, harmonious, healthful, and concentrated exercise of all his energies. It insures him against

waste of time, strength, and opportunity; inspires him with confidence, increases his interest in his calling, intensifies his purposes, and thus constantly augments his power. It would be stale to quote illustrations of this general truth. Every name prominent in history affords an example, and they are found within the circle of every one's acquaintance in all the pursuits of life.

No other work, however, so imperiously demands system as does the work of Christian beneficence. This work infinitely transcends every other in the excellence of its nature, as well as in the grandeur and dignity of its results. It is the great work of life, and is eternal in its consequences. To expect fully to accomplish the subjugation of the world to Christ by occasional, isolated effort, put forth at convenience, or at the bidding of accidental impulse, is as foolish as it would have been in the fathers of the Revolution to have thought successfully to resist the power of Great Britain by committing their cause exclusively to privaters.

What place, indeed, can planless efforts have in the perfect system of the infinite Benefactor? We are not, of course, understood to represent all the efforts of the

Church as having this character. Undoubtedly the efforts of every earnest Christian are, to some extent, characterized by system; but in proportion as there is deficiency in system there must be waste, and in proportion as such deficiency results from want of religious principle the efforts are not genuine. They are not offerings of Christian beneficence. God, as a sovereign, has a right to do with them as he pleases; but we, as professedly Christian laborers, have no right to look for good results from them.

System tends to fortify the Christian against selfishness—the great enemy of beneficence—and to cultivate love, the source of its vitality and strength, and its natural and powerful ally. It forms an attachment to the work itself, which brings to it a more energetic, vigorous, and whole-hearted devotion. It contributes to prosperity in business, and so enlarges the means of giving. It induces habits of beneficence, and thus secures constancy. It promotes economy, and thereby saves for beneficence that which extravagance would squander.

Such is a glance at the advantages which a well-arranged system brings to the Christian in his efforts to extend the victories of the Cross. When we remember that the



largest liberality consistent with general prosperity is required of us, with what accumulated force do these advantages urge upon us the duty of adopting at once, if we have not already done so, the most efficient system which the light of reason and revelation enable us to discover. Having done this, we shall begin to see and feel that the Gospel standard of liberality is a practicable one. With the exception of the few who are already examples to the Church, Christians would be able the first year to increase their contributions to the great enterprises for the world's salvation fourfold, and in all probability within a few years tenfold.

The practicability of liberality with system has been thoroughly tested. System enabled God's ancient people to give in the various tithes and offerings at least one-fourth of their income; and yet, while they remained faithful to the requirements, to prosper in temporal things beyond any contemporary nation. System enabled John Wesley to give at first £2 a year, after that £32, then £92, and so on until he had given more than a hundred thousand dollars, besides bequeathing to the Christian cause an active life of almost unparalleled usefulness, and in his published works an imperishable

treasure. System has enabled many Christians from the first, as the minimum, to give a tenth of all, and, by their unanimous testimony, always with the signal blessing of God, often enabling them to multiply the proportion as life advanced.

Several noble examples have lately been bequeathed to the Church; and numbers of Christians, here and there, among the poor as well as the rich, convinced of duty and inspired with hope, have improved the lesson of their experience, and are successfully acting upon similar plans. All who have adopted the practice of systematic beneficence testify to its superiority. Having tried the doctrine, they declare it to be of God.

We have now seen that the duty of system in beneficence is sanctioned by the universal dictates of reason; that it is implied in the system which characterizes the divine benefactions to us, and the calls for beneficence upon us; and that it is corroborated by the superior efficiency of systematic beneficence as demonstrated by experience, and by the impossibility of fully meeting the claims of the Gospel without it. We find yet another conclusive argument for system in its necessity to secure the highest moral

influence of our efforts upon ourselves; but as we shall have occasion to refer to this in another place, it is sufficient to name it here.

We have referred to these indirect evidences of the duty under consideration not because we suppose the duty disputed, but for the purpose of placing it clearly and vividly before the mind. A plain statement of the duty, receiving as it does the intuitive response of common-sense, cannot fail to secure general assent. The great error is want of reflection. The attention of a large majority of Christians has never been thoroughly called to the subject. Some, doubtless, are criminally insensible to duty; but the small minority who have given thought to the subject, and are alive to a sense of the duty, generally encounter a difficulty at the outset in the question what particular plan they ought to adopt, which occasions long delay, too often as long as life itself.

This is the point to which we shall here suppose the Christian reader may have arrived. Seeing and feeling it to be his duty to enter upon some plan of systematic effort in the great work of beneficence, and true in his heart to his vows of fidelity to the Christian cause, he is disposed promptly to

obey. Now he proceeds to deliberate. "What plan shall I adopt? This is a grave question. Only the wisest and most efficient plan will meet the demands of duty. I must take time for thoughtful inquiry. Will any of the known plans pursued by other Christians accord with my circumstances? Shall I adopt the resolution of Wesley to limit my annual expenses to a specified sum, and give all the rest? This might have been wise for him; but my unavoidable expenses may double in future years. Shall I, with another Christian, resolve to contribute to the support of every missionary, or with another, if possible, to have something, if it be but a single nail in every edifice that is going up for Christ. All honor to those who have endeavored to do this; but to me their plans seem impracticable. Shall I give a portion of all my income? or a portion of what remains after meeting my current expenses? Shall I give five, ten, twenty, or fifty per cent.? Shall I lay by in store for the Christian cause once a week, once a month, or once a year?"

It is not easy for human judgment to decide this matter. Is it wonderful that the devout Christian often finds his wisdom baffled in the attempt? Reason may venture

her preferences for some one plan, but she does it with a hesitation which proves her voice to be without authority. This difficulty, great as it is, does not, of course, justify a neglect of the duty ; but we suspect that in nine cases in ten it occasions neglect. What the Christian wants, yea, needs, to enable him with satisfaction and confidence to enter at once upon a decisive course of action, is a few simple rules having the sanction of Infinite Wisdom. And has not Infinite Wisdom furnished him such rules? Certainly it is reasonable to expect some definite directions in reference to the method of discharging a duty to which such prominence has been given. This has been done in another case closely analogous to this—the duty of specially consecrating a part of our time to religion. The Christian is not left to doubt whether he shall devote to this purpose a portion of each week, or only a portion of each month or year ; nor whether it shall be a portion of the whole week, or a portion of the time that shall remain after accumulating a sufficiency to support his family or station ; nor whether a seventh or a tenth of the whole time is the smallest proportion which in any case can satisfy the demands of this duty ; nor whether the first or the last day of the

week shall be devoted to it. To have submitted these questions to the Christian would have involved him in inextricable difficulty. His reason could not satisfactorily answer them; therefore revelation has answered them for him. Neither can human reason determine similar questions in respect to the religious duty of devoting a portion of our property to the Lord. Now shall our expectation be disappointed of finding these too decided, and with equal clearness, on the same authority as in the other case? We think not.

It seems generally to be supposed that the precepts of the Bible on this subject are not obligatory in form, but only require system in the discharge of the duty, leaving each individual to adopt such a system as shall be most convenient in his particular circumstances. It would certainly be unjust to complain of those who have endeavored to obey these precepts by any method conscientiously chosen. The few who have aimed at conformity to them, though they may have partially mistaken their import, deserve the thanks of the Church. We are persuaded, however, that the teachings of Scripture on this subject will not admit of any such modifications, but that they furnish us with a

plan of operation which is obligatory upon Christians generally—a plan not so numerous in its rules as to be impracticable, but just definite enough to meet a common want, by answering those great questions which human reason cannot answer, and thus to guide the Church militant, without delay, to satisfactory and harmonious as well as systematic effort.

We invite the reader's attention to what we understand to be the Scriptural rules on this subject in the three following chapters, and we do this assured that every reader of whom Christ would not be ashamed in presence of his Father, will examine them with candor, and, if he shall find them reasonably sustained, will gratefully accept them as the divine solution of his difficulties, and promptly conform to their requirements.

## CHAPTER VII.

FIRST SCRIPTURAL RULE—WE ARE REQUIRED  
OF ALL OUR INCOME TO MAKE THE FIRST  
APPROPRIATION TO THE LORD.

THE reader will at once call to mind, that this rule is a fundamental principle in the system of beneficence prescribed for the Jew. Of all the gifts of Providence, whether in the increase of his flocks, or his herds, or in the produce of his fields, his orchards, or his vineyards, he was required to bring the first to the Lord, or to redeem it by an equivalent. This rule, then, is one of the laws upon which the Jewish system was based. The superstructure was temporary, being adapted only to peculiar circumstances. But the foundation is immutable, and hence constitutes, so far as it extends, the true basis of systematic beneficence in all ages.

It is highly probable, indeed, (and this is all the Christian has a right to demand as evidence of a particular duty,) that the rule we are considering is one of the original laws given to the first inhabitants of the earth to govern them and their posterity forever.



The first mention of it in the Bible clearly indicates that it was a duty already understood by the Jews. "*Thou shalt not delay* to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors : the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep." The prefatory clause, "*Thou shalt not delay*," implies that this was but a restatement of a well-known law revealed long before. True, there are previous allusions to the giving of tithes, but this is the first recorded command to give any portion of all; and here it is assumed that it was a duty generally acknowledged, though by some not promptly attended to. The Israelite is commanded to avoid a common delinquency, *delaying* the required offerings.

This law, moreover, seems to have been known generally to the early nations of the world, and, to some extent, at least, to have been observed by them. Though most of them were ignorant of the true God, they properly regarded the offering of the first-fruits as an appropriate expression of gratitude to the bountiful giver. Thus Censorinus : "Our ancestors, who held their food, their country, the light, and all that they possessed, from the bounty of the gods, con-

secrated to them a part of all their property as a token of their gratitude. As soon as the harvest was got in, before they had tasted of the fruits they appointed libations to be made to the gods. And as they held their fields and cities as gifts from their gods, they consecrated a part for temples and shrines, where they might worship them." Pliny, Horace, Tibullus, and other ancient writers, bear repeated testimony to the same custom. It is well known, too, that the offering of the first-fruits was a part of the religion of the aboriginal inhabitants of this country. Now this custom, prevailing as it did, and still does, among nations widely separated, speaking different languages, having but little intercourse with each other, and of dissimilar habits, must have had its origin as far back as when these nations were one, that is, before the dispersion of Babel. Yea, the custom is of such a nature that its origin is unaccountable on any other hypothesis than that it was instituted by divine authority.

This is strongly corroborated by the notice in Gen. iv, 3, 4, of the offerings made by Cain and Abel. The principal subject here is the crime of Cain in the murder of his brother. Their offerings are

introduced incidentally because of their connection with the event. We do not look, then, for a minute description of them. Yet this brief reference sheds some clear light upon our subject, and it deserves special attention because it relates to so early a period in the history of fallen man. The fault of Cain seems to have consisted, not in doing, but in neglecting to do—in keeping back a part. We read that “Cain brought of the fruits of the ground an offering (a *minchah*) unto the Lord.” “The *minchah* was in general a eucharistic or gratitude-offering, and is simply what is implied in *the fruits* of the ground brought by Cain to the Lord, by which he testified his belief in him as the Lord of the universe, and the dispenser of temporal blessings.”\* In bringing the *minchah* Cain doubtless did right. Such offerings we know were required and approved in the Mosaic dispensation. The most learned and judicious commentators agree in the opinion that Abel brought a *minchah* as well as Cain; but “Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock.” Dr. Kennicott, quoted with approval by Dr. Clarke and others, maintains that the words translated “he also brought,” &c., should be

\* Dr. Adam Clarke.

rendered, "Abel *brought it also*, i. e., a *min-chah*, or gratitude-offering; and besides this he brought of the first-born of his flock."

This agrees with the allusion in Heb. xi, 4, where it is said, "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice (*pleiona thusian*) than Cain." Dr. Clarke contends that *pleiona* cannot mean more excellent, but that it simply expresses the superior number or magnitude of Abel's offerings. It is certain that the primary and usual meaning of this term is *more in number* or in quantity. But we need not insist upon the literal meaning or general usage of a word, for in the phrase "God testifying of his gifts," found in the same verse, we have proof that Abel actually did bring a plurality of offerings; while it is obvious from Gen. iv, 3, that Cain brought only a single offering.

Now from all this it is highly probable that Cain's offering was rejected, not on account of anything offensive in the offering itself, but because he withheld another, and it is likely a more valuable offering, which God required of him as an acknowledgment of sin, and of his dependence for salvation upon the great sacrifice to be made by the Lamb of God. So much is probable.

But so much as follows is established by

the account before us, namely, that at this early period, but a few years subsequent to the first transgression, man was required of the increase of his possessions to bring a portion to the Lord in religious offerings. The offerings of Abel certainly were not will-worship. He was approved because of his free yet strict observance of the known requirements of God; and Cain was condemned, because, through self-righteousness, or selfishness, or both, in some respect he disregarded such requirements. This no one will doubt.

But we find a law substantially similar to this at a still earlier date. We are explicitly taught that God claimed one tree or species of tree in the garden which Adam was required to dress and keep as exclusively his. And this was a beautiful tree, very likely the fairest in the garden, and the fruit of it was good for food. Exactly corresponding to this, Adam was required to devote the first day after his creation as a Sabbath to the Lord. Indeed it appears that it was not until after he had thus consecrated a day to the special duties of religion, that the secular trust of cultivating the garden was committed to him. The Sabbath, though denominated the seventh, because it followed

the six days' work of creation, was the first to Adam. With him its duties always preceded those of the six days. So it was with the Jew ; and so it is with the Christian.

The particular disposal made of the offerings of the primitive inhabitants does not at all affect their bearing upon our subject. They were brought to the Lord, and disposed of according to his directions. Then probably, there were no poor to be supported by charity. Then there was no class of special laborers like that of the ministry to be maintained. Then no expensive educational institutions were needed. Then no Missionary, Bible, Tract, or Sunday-School Societies were called for. But man was required to give a portion to the Lord for the same reason that he is now ; and that these great enterprises of Christianity, now that they are needed, have been made dependent upon his offerings, namely, because it was demanded for the protection and promotion of his interests. The whole history of man, as a religious being, presented in the Bible, the entire scheme of Providence in his behalf, and his own experience, prove that in his nature, as it is in his fallen state, there is as deep a necessity for a law like that under

consideration as there is for the Sabbath. We need it to guard us against an unholy love of gain, and against seeking property by unlawful means. We need it that every gift of Providence may become a consecrated possession. We need it that each new expression of God's love to us may awaken gratitude in our hearts to him. We need it that we may constantly remember our relation to God as stewards. Above all, we need this law, that every new acquisition may remind us of our dependence upon the great salvation, to extend a knowledge of which we are required to contribute.

Now, let the Christian reader bear in mind, that every clear intimation of God's will, in whatever form it comes to us, is supremely authoritative, and we here submit the question to him, whether, if Infinite Wisdom had seen fit to furnish us with the foregoing evidences only, these would not be sufficient reasonably to establish the rule before us as a divine requirement. They prove that God is well-pleased with those who observe it, and this demonstrates it to be a duty. None but the Romanist believes in supererogatory works. They prove, moreover, that God has given such a law to man, and there is not a shadow of evidence that

it has been repealed. Besides, it is obviously a law of universal adaptation.

But, finally, we have the direct command of God. Prov. iii, 9: "HONOR THE LORD WITH THY SUBSTANCE, AND WITH THE FIRST-FRUIITS OF ALL THINE INCREASE." This is not quoted from the Jewish code of laws. Consequently, whatever may be thought respecting the present obligation of that code, it is unquestionable that this precept is addressed to man in all ages subsequent to the time it was revealed. Now it as explicitly teaches the duty of offering to the Lord the first portion of all, as it does of offering anything to him. If otherwise, there might be a question with regard to the proper inference to be drawn from the fact that a law similar to this was given to man in the first age of the world—that it was binding in the time of the patriarchs—that it was adopted as a fundamental principle in the Jewish system—and that it universally commends itself to the common-sense and moral sense of man—this direct precept forever puts the question to rest. The following comment upon it is from a writer whose learning, piety, and sound judgment entitle his opinion to the greatest weight:—"The MINCHAH, or gratitude-offering to God,



commanded under the law, is of endless obligation. . . . Whatever God sends us in the way of secular prosperity, there is *a portion of it* always for the poor, and for God's cause. When that portion is thus disposed of, the rest is *sanctified*; when it is withheld, God's curse is upon the whole."\*

It being now established, that of every increase of our possessions we are required to make the first appropriation to the treasury of the Lord, the question at once arises, What portion does the great Giver of all expect of us? The resources and circumstances of mankind being so various, it is not remarkable that this question should be left, to a considerable extent, to our own judgment, enlightened by the general teachings of revelation and by the indications of Providence. Yet there is a divinely-prescribed limit below which we cannot fall without robbing God. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

° Dr. Adam Clarke.

## CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND SCRIPTURAL RULE—WE ARE REQUIRED  
AS THE LOWEST PROPORTION TO GIVE A  
TENTH OF ALL.

IF we mistake not, there is in many minds a prejudice against this rule which imposes an obstacle to fair argument in its support. This, then, seems to be the proper place for a more distinct inquiry respecting the kind and degree of evidence which ought to be satisfactory to us. It is not claimed that the perpetual obligation of this law is self-evident, nor that it can be proved beyond the possibility of a doubt. Such is not the case in respect to the nature of any doctrine, or the extent of the claims of any duty of religion. Indeed, it is a sentiment which Christians hold in common, that absolute proof upon every subject so obvious as to call for no exercise of the understanding, would interfere with the purposes of human probation. "The evidence of religion not appearing obvious, may constitute one particular part of some men's trial in the religious sense; as it gives scope for a virtuous exercise or vicious

neglect of their understanding in examining or not examining into that evidence. There seems no possible reason to be given why we may not be in a state of moral probation with regard to the exercise of our understanding upon the subject of religion as we are with regard to our behavior in common affairs. The former is as much a thing within our power and choice as the latter.”\*

In accordance with this remark, quoted from an acknowledged standard in every branch of the Church, we find that those institutions of religion which make the greatest demands upon us, are at the same time most demanded by our interests as probationers ; and we find also, that while abundant evidences of them are placed within our reach, which, upon candid examination, cannot fail to commend themselves to our judgment, they are of such a nature, and are so distributed, as to afford the fullest scope for the exercise of our understanding. Of such institutions are the Sabbath, which is an assessment upon our time, and religious offerings making another assessment upon the avails of our labor during the six days. These institutions, then, afford a peculiarly favorable opportunity for testing our candor, by de-

\* Butler's Analogy.

volving upon us the responsibility of investigating the evidences which sustain them, and determine the measure of their claims upon us. Further, this seems essential to our moral freedom. If God should, by a direct revelation to each individual of such a character that it could not be questioned, inform us in exact terms of his requirements upon our time and property, and also of the certain consequences of disobedience, then disobedience, and consequently voluntary obedience, would scarcely be possible.

It is plain, moreover, that between these two institutions, that requiring a portion of our actual gains conflicts most directly with a selfish attachment to our possessions. It is felt to be a light thing to rest a day in seven, in comparison with relaxing our grasp upon so large a proportion of all the acquisitions of our toils. Hence we naturally expect that the proofs of a specific law respecting the required proportion of our gains, will be somewhat less obvious than those relating to the institution of the Sabbath. When we have once examined them, however, we shall find them no less decisive. Indeed, the proofs that both these institutions, as required of the Jews, are obligatory upon us are nearly parallel. So the objections

which naturally arise against them are precisely similar.

It has often been assumed that the Sabbath was an institution peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation, because it is nowhere distinctly stated that it was required or observed before the time of Moses, and there is no command relating to it in the New Testament. To this it has been well replied, "However the will of God may be manifested, if it is with such clearness as to exclude all reasonable doubt, it is equally obligatory as when it assumes the formality of legal promulgation; . . . and if disregarded, it will be at every man's peril."\* Again, license in the mode of observing the Sabbath has been pleaded on the ground that we are not furnished with more definite rules. The sensible reply is, "Probably the matter has been so left to 'try us' and prove us, and to know what is in our heart.' Something may have been reserved in this case for the exercise of spontaneous obedience; for that generous construction of the precept which will be dictated by devotion and gratitude; and for the operation of a feeling of indignant shame, that the only day which God has reserved to himself should be grudged to him,

\* Watson.

and trenched upon by every petty excuse of convenience, interest, or sloth, and pared down, and negotiated for in the spirit of one who seeks to overreach another.”\*

These remarks apply with emphasis to the corresponding institution now under consideration. In inquiring into its evidences, then, let us learn a lesson of caution against extravagance in our demands. But let not the institution itself which we are advocating be mistaken. Confound it not with the pernicious and oppressive custom of exacting tithes by the power of civil law. The tendency of human enactments on the subject is to change a great privilege to a great burden, and to substitute a mere cringing submission to injustice for a high sense of obligation to God, and a spirit of liberal benevolence toward the world. God required tithes of his ancient people, but he also required them to bring their tithes freely. He authorized no officer to enforce obedience. Those who withheld the tithes were responsible only to him. So it is now.

Before inquiring into the evidences of this law as an existing institution, by way of further rescuing it from the prejudice which obscures and distorts it, we will glance at the

probabilities in the case. If we properly view the subject, some definite rule respecting the required proportion is a reasonable expectation.

Let it be noticed, first, that a rule seems needed which shall afford us a proximate answer to the question how large a portion we ought to give. This, as before observed, is one of the questions which human reason cannot answer. A few might, by extensive investigation, form some vague conjecture in respect to the amount needed; but the great majority, if candid, could do little better than guess. They could not determine whether the proportion should be one-half or one-hundredth. But if God has intimated it as his will that as the lowest proportion he expects a tenth, we all have something definite from which to reason upon the subject; while the knowledge that, in general, much more is expected, affords ample opportunity for the exercise of our judgment and the cultivation of liberality, and devolves upon us a reasonable responsibility. That we should be informed, then, of the minimum proportion required seems highly probable.

The probability of this is increased by the rule already considered. We find that

something definite has been prescribed—a portion of all. This meets one want, but it creates another. The rule seems incomplete. Shall the portion be the same for the poor as for the rich, as is the custom of some Churches in their contributions for the missionary cause? or shall the portion be in proportion to the real ability? Selfishness often refuses to listen to the dictates of common-sense. Only a voice of authority will be heard amid the general clamor for gain. If any portion would answer, the rule would be a very acceptable one to the avaricious. True, we are required to give liberally. But what is liberality? We can only determine by a comparison with some definite standard. The rich man could not justly conclude that he gave liberally, simply because he gave one-half or two-thirds, though he might so deceive himself as to imagine a tenth of his thousand or thousands to be a liberal proportion for him.

But the poor man would be in still greater difficulty. The whole of his income affords his family only a very moderate support. If there were no specific rule on the subject he might conclude that nothing was expected of him. When his attention has been called to the rule requiring him to give something



from every week's earnings, if a Christian, he is ready to give the portion or proportion required of him. But should he give more, he would be unfaithful to his duties as a husband and father. It cannot be that he has been left in utter doubt with regard to the claims of God upon his income. It seems indispensable that he should know what portion is required. Then he can cheerfully bring it to the treasury of the Lord, assured that the self-denial, however great it may be, to which by so doing he must subject his loved ones, is approved by the great Provider, who loves them more than he does, and will be overruled for their good.

The probability is further strengthened by the analogous rule relating to the duty of devoting a portion of our time to religion, which we have in the institution of the Sabbath. Without this rule, who would have conjectured that so large a portion of the time—one whole day in seven—should be exclusively devoted to this purpose? What poor man, whose family, after his utmost endeavor, are poorly clad and scantily fed, would infer from any general precepts on the subject that he ought to labor to provide for them only six days in seven? Could he,

in the absence of a specific law, feel himself justified in such a course? But now to the Christian this is plain. God has spoken. Of the most destitute as well as of those who are in affluent circumstances, fifty-two days in the year—one in every seven—he requires that they abstain wholly from worldly pursuits, and devote the time specially to religious purposes.

Now, undoubtedly, the grand aim of this law is the spiritual well-being of man. It was needful that all men, for at least a seventh of the time, should withdraw their thoughts from their earthly occupations, and rest from the toils of this life in the exclusive exercise of their powers upon those things which concern the life to come. This is an essential part of the scheme by which man is favored with the best possible probation for an eternal Sabbath in the heavenly world. It is infinitely better that he should suffer want in that which is peculiar to the present life, than that he should lose any of its advantages as a probation for life eternal. Yet experience has demonstrated that this law, in all its bearings, is a beneficent one. It is in harmony with every other law of God, and hence, instead of plunging any class into poverty and suffering, it promotes

the temporal prosperity of all who observe it. Indeed, the Sabbath is preëminently a blessing to the poor.

But man's spiritual welfare further demanded, that of all his acquisitions in the six remaining days he should devote a portion to the cause of beneficence, and for the reason that his present existence is probationary to an eternal existence in the likeness of his beneficent Redeemer. Now, as in the former case, there must be a minimum; otherwise the proportion might be reduced below any appreciable value. A seventh of every one's time holy unto the Lord, is the lowest proportion which is consistent with man's duty and his interests as a probationer. So it must be with some definite proportion of every one's income. Now should we, by candid inquiry, find good reason for the conclusion that God expects of all at least a tenth of their income, this surely will be no more than might be expected from what all Christians acknowledge to be the required proportion of time. Moreover, since we know the Sabbath to be for the temporal as well as spiritual interests of the poor, we cannot doubt that the same is true of whatever law may have been instituted respecting their duty

to contribute to the cause of beneficence.

Such is the human view. Of course we do not claim that this shows it to be our duty to give tithes of all. This is just what it fails to show. It shows most plainly, that while there must be something definite in the divine requirements upon our income—a limit below which we cannot fall without trenching upon duty—we are utterly incapable of fixing that limit. Hence it shows that we need some such law; and from analogy it shows a further expectation of it. It also calls to mind the numerous promises, in which we are assured that conformity to the divine standard of liberality, however great its demands, tends to the promotion of every good of human life. Thus in the light of revelation respecting the Sabbath, and of its general teachings on the subject of liberality, it shows that the enmity which this law at first encounters from almost every one, is grounded not in reason, but in the natural selfishness of the human heart.

Now, patient reader, we ask again the advantage of your candor while we endeavor to show that this particular law has actually been instituted and is still in force.

In the first place, we invite attention to

certain unmistakable glimpses of the existence of this law in very early times. As elsewhere noticed, it is unquestionable that God did reveal to the early inhabitants a complete system of laws for the regulation of their conduct and that of their descendants in all succeeding ages, and that among these laws was one requiring a portion of their property for religious offerings. It is freely granted that in the brief history of the antediluvian world the allusions bearing upon our subject are not very definite. It is the same in respect to the Sabbath. The proportionate value of the species of choice fruit required of Adam to the value of all the products of the garden cultivated by him is not stated. Nor is it intimated what ratio the offerings of Abel and Noah bore to all the increase of their possessions. We know, however, (if our chronology may be trusted,) that the confusion of tongues, and the consequent dispersion and non-intercourse of Noah's descendants, took place two hundred and fifty years before his death. Hence the law which Noah obeyed in his religious offerings must have been known at that time, and, so far as there is agreement in the traces of it found among the isolated nations which sprung from him, it is plain that they afford us a truthful index

to the law. Now it is said by those who have extensively investigated the subject, and are entitled to our confidence, that "almost all nations of the earth have agreed in giving a tenth of their property to religious uses."\* Of course we are not to understand that all men have actually given a tenth, but that the custom of devoting a tenth to religion is among the traditions of nearly all nations, and has been observed generally by devout worshipers.

Parallel to this, though by no means so direct and forcible, is the evidence for the Sabbath found in the custom of various nations of dividing time by weeks of seven days. This of itself, however, does not even suggest that the primitive inhabitants were required to devote the whole of each successive seventh day to religion. From this alone, indeed, nothing could be inferred. Yet in view of its harmony with the law as given by Moses, and of the hallowing of the first day, mentioned in connection with the account of the creation, the division by hebdomadal periods is regarded as a valid evidence that the Sabbath was required of man at least as early as the dispersion of Babel. But the world-wide acknowledgment that a tenth of all should be

\* Dr. A. Clarke.

devoted to religious purposes, aside from its harmony with the entire range of sacred history, and with the law as proclaimed upon Mount Sinai, affords us in itself a distinct and irrefragable evidence that a law requiring a tenth for the cause of religion was early revealed to man. Observe, the custom from which we infer this relates not to a tenfold division of property, but to the actual devotement of one whole tenth to religion. We do not say that this alone demonstrates our position; but we do say that the unyielding fact before us, in the absence of any counter evidence, establishes a strong probability for the law. This fact must have had some cause. A divine law would be an adequate and natural cause, and no other even probable cause can be conjectured.

It is not essential to our argument to know whether Adam and Abel gave a tenth. We are all descendants of Noah; and if, as the fact stated affords us good reason to believe, this law was in existence in his time, it is in force now, for it has never been repealed. Probably, however, the minimum proportion at first required of fallen man was never changed. Both Noah's father and grandfather were cotemporary with Adam, the former for a period of fifty-six years, and the

latter for two hundred and forty-three years. Doubtless Noah was himself cotemporary with many of the immediate children of Adam.

Again: that God required a tenth immediately subsequent to the time of Noah, is conclusive from the example of Abraham. We are informed in Gen. xiv, 20, that "He gave tithes (*i. e.* a tenth) of all" to Melchizedek, "who was the priest of the most high God." Now Abraham was born only two years subsequent to the death of Noah, and he must have known the law as observed by him. There is no intimation that he received any new law. Besides, the law under which he acted being identical with that which is traceable among the nations generally, it is morally certain that both he and they received it through their distinguished ancestor. We insist that in the light of the evidences before us this does not admit of reasonable doubt. Abraham did not give a tenth because that proportion accidentally occurred to him just at that time. A notion more obviously repugnant to the dictates of common sense never found an entrance into the mind of man, than that the divine Lawgiver should borrow the idea of this law from Abraham, and then subsequently in-



corporate it into the constitution of his government over his chosen people. Nor did the nations of the earth borrow it from him; for, according to the common chronology, they had then been separated from each other for three hundred and thirty-four years. But mark the style of the historian. "Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And *he gave him tithes of all.*" All this is narrated, not as though it was unusual, but as though it was only an ordinary event. Abraham, returning from a righteous encounter with his enemies laden with the goods he had rescued from them, is met by Melchizedek, who first extends to him his hospitalities by setting before him bread and wine. Having thus refreshed him from his exhaustion, as the priest of God he bestows upon him the accustomed blessing, (Num. vi, 23-26,) and Abraham, as a pious man, delivered to him the accustomed tithes.

Passing down a period of a hundred and thirty-four years, we find the next allusion to

this law in the vow of Jacob to give to the Lord a tenth of all the property that should be committed to him. And here, too, it appears, both from the circumstances and from the language employed, that Jacob simply vowed allegiance to a known law of God.

Though younger than his brother Esau, Jacob was chosen of God to be the successor of his father Isaac in the line through which the promise made to Abraham was to be fulfilled. But his mother, who made him her favorite son, distrusted the divine promise, and undertook to accomplish his promotion by unrighteous means. Jacob yielded to the temptation, and adopted her plans. Instead of trusting in God, he dishonorably and cruelly took advantage of his brother's exhaustion to wrest from him his birthright, and then, by a base resort to deception, defrauded him of his father's blessing. As the consequence of this, "Esau hated Jacob," and resolved to take his life. In his extremity, Jacob left his father's house to take refuge from the enmity of his brother among his relatives in Padan-aram. On his way thither he tarried for a night at Haran. A lonely exile, as he laid his head upon his stone pillow in the open air, we may well

suppose he began to feel that the way of the transgressor is hard. The prospect before him was anything but encouraging. It is not improbable that he was humbled by his misfortunes, and closed his eyes in slumber a penitent. It was a favorable time, and the God against whom he had sinned visited him in mercy, and granted him a sensible manifestation of his ever-watchful, bountiful providence. In a dream, he beheld the vision of a ladder extending from earth to heaven, upon which the angels of God were ascending and descending. This doubtless symbolized the special care of his heavenly Father in constantly protecting, guiding, and providing for him. But he also received directly from the Lord, who stood above the ladder, a glorious reassurance that the promise made to Abraham should be verified to him—that the divine presence should graciously accompany him in all his goings—that he should be brought back to the promised land—that it should be the inheritance of his posterity, who should be as the dust of the earth in numbers—that they should spread abroad on every hand, and that through them all the nations of the earth should be blessed. So deeply did this divine manifestation impress the mind of Jacob,

that when he awoke he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." "He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Rising early in the morning, he set up the stone upon which he had rested as a pillar, and, anointing it with oil, consecrated it as a Bethel—a house of God.

Such, in brief, were the circumstances. How natural in view of them that Jacob should immediately take the step that he did—make a solemn vow before God of reverential and affectionate obedience. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and OF ALL THAT THOU SHALT GIVE ME, I WILL SURELY GIVE THE TENTH UNTO THEE." Observe, the vow of Jacob as first expressed in general terms, is that the Lord should be his God; that is, that he would faithfully conform his life to the laws of God. Then, with a special reference to the promise of distinguished prosperity, he repeats the vow by

consecrating the place to the worship of God, and promising to give the required tenth of his possessions to the Lord. In other words, he vowed faithfully to attend to the two great, inseparable duties, religious worship and religious offerings. This was acknowledging the Lord to be his God.

We shall not detain the reader by extended remark upon these examples. It becomes us not to overlook the authority with which the divine approval clothes them. But we would call attention not chiefly to these examples themselves, but to the divine law of which they afford us indices. If Jacob was sometimes unfaithful to his vow, the law to which it relates is none the less authoritative. Both his example and that of Abraham, as recorded for our instruction, teach us not merely to do as they did in precisely similar circumstances, but to obey the law which they reveal to us under all circumstances.

At first it might seem mysterious that if such a law then existed the allusions to it should not be more numerous; but upon a moment's reflection the mystery will disappear. The history of patriarchal times is very brief. Up to the time of Jacob's vow, a period of two thousand two hundred and twenty-five very eventful years, the narrative

occupies only the first twenty-eight chapters of the book of Genesis. Be it also remembered that the historian himself received from God a direct revelation of his law, and proclaimed it to the people. Hence it was unnecessary that he should dwell upon the law in the history of the patriarchs. They had gone to their account, and those for whom Moses wrote—Christians as well as Jews—have the law as given by him. It is not very remarkable, then, that the early historical allusions to the law are few and incidental. We should not expect to find it anywhere treated of as the principal subject.

Yet the occasional references to the law in patriarchal history all exactly agree with the written law, and go far toward proving that the latter was substantially a republication. Indeed, we may be assured of this on the authority of divine immutability. Moses does not inform us, in so many words, that the patriarchs of whom he makes mention were required to worship God and him alone, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and of all their increase in earthly goods to bring the tenth to the Lord; but he all along takes for granted, as it becomes us to do, that the laws of God are unchangeable.

But let it be specially borne in mind that

the allusions to the law respecting religious offerings are much more frequent than to any other law. Indeed, the examples we have just considered present to us a complete view of the identical statute upon this subject, which was subsequently proclaimed upon Mount Sinai. Of all the spoils Abraham gave a tenth, and Jacob promised to give a tenth of all that the Lord should give him.

Now, first look at these examples separately; next, mark their agreement with each other; then their agreement with the law inculcated by Moses; then their agreement with the custom of devoting a tenth to religion, found in several widely-separated nations and then behold the harmony of this concurrent testimony with the established fact that, from the first, some portion of man's income was required in religious offerings, and surely no reasonable doubt can remain that, long anterior to the dawn of the Mosaic dispensation, it was made the duty of man, of all the increase of his possessions, to bring at least a tenth to the Lord. Thus we are led to the very important conclusion, that since this law is not a peculiarity of the Jewish ecclesiastical system, it could not have passed away when that system was superseded by Christianity;

but that it is now as sacred a religious obligation as is the observance of the Sabbath.

So far we have reasoned from the priority of this law to the first publication of it by Moses. We repeat the admission, that the evidences upon which our premise rests here are not of such a nature that they cannot be questioned. If they were, our conclusion would be irresistible. But we claim that these evidences establish so strong a probability as to make the law obligatory upon us. Viewed in connection with the further evidence furnished in the language of the written law, they are, to say the least, as full and decisive as are the evidences that the primitive inhabitants were required to devote each recurring seventh day to religion. Had it been wise, the divine Lawgiver could, by a single sentence, either in patriarchal history or in the New Testament, have placed both these institutions beyond the possibility of doubt to all believers in divine revelation. But in his wisdom he has seen fit to test our candor, and the sincerity and strength of our devotion, by resting them upon such evidences as require investigation and after the fullest investigation may be easily resisted, if we consult our own convenience, or take refuge in the fortress of a selfish love of gain.



How solemn the responsibility which Heaven has thus devolved upon us. Yet how reasonable. We are not required to exclude every doubt from the mind. The religious obligation of the Sabbath is so generally admitted among us, that the temptation to call in question its evidences is comparatively slight. Indeed, we have proved the Sabbath to be a divine institution by experience. We know it to be of God because it is a great blessing. But in the absence of a personal experience of the practicability and blessedness of the divine claim to a tenth of our income, and in opposition to the prevailing impression (it cannot be called an opinion) in the Church, we shall not find it easy to avoid doubt. But if, between a religious obligation and what would otherwise be an innocent self-indulgence, there intervenes a doubt, in which scale ought we to place the doubt? Should we give the preference to religion, or to self? What is the just weight of our own convenience or gratification, or of any temporal consideration against the infinite claims of Jehovah? To ask these questions distinctly is to answer them. No person who deserves the name of a Christian can hesitate for a moment. "Doubting concerning religion implies such a degree of evidence

for it as, joined with the consideration of its importance, unquestionably lays men under obligations to have a dutiful regard to it in their behavior.”\*

We shall now introduce to the reader another argument of an entirely different nature from the one just considered. We have viewed our subject from the standpoint of patriarchal law. Let us now take our position upon the law as given by Moses. Here, at all events, we stand upon firm ground—our premise is sure. We have the law in the very words of Jehovah, Lev. xxvii, 30, 32: “All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s: it is holy unto the Lord.” “And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.”

The only question which can arise here, is whether we are warranted in the conclusion that this law is obligatory under the Christian dispensation. We unhesitatingly assume the affirmative. But, in pursuing our inquiry, let us never forget that the law stands recorded in unequivocal language among the divine statutes, and that we are

under as sacred an obligation to obey it as we are to discharge any other Christian duty, unless it can be clearly shown that its obligation ceased at the commencement of the Christian dispensation. The presumption is in favor of the ceaseless claims of the law; hence the burden of proof justly falls upon those who dispute its claims upon the Christian. The proper form of the question is not, Is this law now in force? but, Has it passed away by its purpose being fully accomplished? Let us ever remember, too, that while nothing short of the most absolute proof can justify us in the conclusion that we are released from the claims of any divine law, we have no right to demand such proof that any law is perpetual in its claims. We take our position, however, in the confidence that when the evidences upon which it rests have been carefully and candidly examined, it will be found impregnable.

We readily admit that there is a part of the Mosaic law which is not binding upon the Christian. We shall not, however, find it at all difficult to determine what this part is. Excepting perhaps a few statutes in the civil code which were merely prudential, and were unquestionably limited in their

application, the law as given by Moses is, in general terms, divided into the moral law and the ceremonial law.\* The moral law requires religion itself; the ceremonial simply prescribed the form of religion in an introductory dispensation. Hence all the precepts of the former are perpetual, while those of the latter passed away with the preparatory dispensation of which they were peculiarities.

No part of the law has been formally repealed. "Think not," says the great Teacher, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." This language is specially addressed to those who think the law as given by Moses destroyed now that grace and truth have come by Jesus Christ. "Think not this," is his command. Our Lord refers here not merely to the precepts of the decalogue; but he speaks in universal terms of whatever is sanctioned or prohibited either in the pentateuch, or in the prophetic Scriptures. He declares with solemn

\* Let not the statutes of the Jewish civil code be confounded with the penalties affixed to them.

emphasis that not one of the least of the commandments found anywhere in these sacred writings shall ever be destroyed. "He came not to destroy, but to fulfill."

The term rendered "fulfill" (*plērosai*) means either to make full, complete, or perfect; or to accomplish, according to the object to which it is applied. Both these senses are sanctioned by extensive usage in the New Testament and the Septuagint, as well as in the classics. In the latter sense Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law relating to the form of Jewish worship, all of which pointed to him, and was a shadow of the good things of his coming kingdom. This was not destroyed, but it came to a full end in Christ, because in him its purpose was fully accomplished. But he came to fulfill all the precepts of the moral law in the sense of perfecting them, and showing the depth and fullness of their import. He taught that they require the obedience of the heart as well as of the outward man.

The question before us now becomes a very plain one. Does the divine claim to a tenth belong to the ceremonial law which came to an end in Christ? or is it, like that enjoining the Sabbath, a moral statute—a part of that law which he came to make

complete by teaching the fullness of its claims? The answer is obvious.

First, that this statute belongs to the moral, and not the ceremonial law, is evident from its nature. It comes in direct conflict with our natural eagerness for dominion and possession, and requires what to us seems a sacrifice. It demands a practical acknowledgment of God as the giver of all, and our rightful sovereign. The manner of expending the tithe was ceremonial; but acknowledging the tithe as holy unto the Lord, is strictly a religious act—an act of the soul—entirely distinct from the ceremonial law. So the law requiring each successive seventh day as a Sabbath is moral, and hence perpetual; while the laws which enjoined upon the Jew the particular form of worship upon the Sabbath were ceremonial, and hence temporary.

Again: we have the decisive fact that this law was given to Moses as a perfectly distinct statute, and nineteen years prior to the date of the law which gave the tithe to the Levites. This alone puts the question beyond controversy.

Indeed, it appears that the tithe was variously employed in the preceding ages of the

world. Doubtless the appropriation of it was always prescribed by special statutes suited to the time and circumstances. The antediluvian patriarchs, including Noah, seem to have been priests to their own families, and may have expended the tithe wholly in offerings made by themselves upon the sacrificial altar. Abraham we know, in one instance, gave all the tithe to Melchizedek, who was the priest of the most high God, and the fullest type of Christ. In the incidental allusion to this law in the history of Jacob we find simply his religious vow to give the tithe to the Lord, with no intimation respecting the particular object. Here, in the words in which this law was received by Moses, as just noticed, there is no reference to the application of the tithe. Subsequently the tithe of the land was made a part of the portion of the Levites, and they in turn were required to give a tithe of their tithe to the priests. The purpose of the Levitical system being now fulfilled in Christ, of course another change occurs in the direction of the tithe. It is, however, still the Lord's, to be applied in sustaining the institutions of religion, and in such charities as are clearly auxiliary to its promotion.

We may now regard the question as

settled that this statute belongs not to the ceremonial, but to the moral law. If we had no other evidence than this in its support, we appeal to the reader whether this alone would not sustain it firmly.

But we find further substantial evidence that the law under consideration is perpetual in the terms in which it was given to Moses: "All the tithe of the land is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord." Observe particularly, and bear constantly in mind, that this is the very form in which Moses received this statute from Jehovah. But it is obvious, upon the first and most casual reading, that this cannot be the proclamation of a new law limited in its application to a single nation, and to them only for a few generations. On the contrary, it is plainly a re-statement of a universal and perpetual law, with an implied command to the children of Israel to obey it.

It has been justly urged that in the thirtieth verse, in which the tithe of the land is required, the present tense excludes the notion that God at this time set up a new claim. But it has a broader significancy.



It shows the ceaseless obligation of this law. If the future tense were employed, as in the case of the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, that would not imply that the law was then first made known, much less that it was limited to a few centuries; for usage sanctions the future tense in the declaration of eternal laws as in most of the precepts of the decalogue. Indeed, the direct command must relate to the future only, as we have only the future in which to obey. But the present tense, "All the tithe of the land is the Lord's," admits of but one interpretation. It clearly expresses an unchangeable divine reservation of a tenth. "This God claims as his own; it is spoken of here as being a point concerning which there was neither doubt nor difficulty."\* Precisely similar language is employed in relation to the Sabbath. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The first of every seven days from man's creation, and the first tenth of all his increase, is THE LORD'S,—at least in all time. With this, too, agrees the statute appropriating the tithe to the use of the Levites. God did not at first formally command the people to pay the Levites a tenth of their income. Having

\* Dr. A. Clarke.

already claimed a tenth as his, he now simply informed them that he had himself given the tithe to the Levites, thereby pointing out to them how he expected them to employ his tithe. "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for the service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Num. xviii, 21.

Though, as observed, we find the future tense in the thirty-second verse, which relates to the tithe of the flocks and herds, yet this verse too affords us conclusive evidence that the tithe was already understood. This is intimated in the prefatory clause, "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock"—a form of expression which implies that the subject was a familiar one. This, it will not be questioned, is the more natural inference. But our position finds decisive evidence in this verse in its allusion to an established custom by which the Lord's tithe was separated from the rest. "Of whatsoever passeth under the rod the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord." This custom is explained by the rabbins as follows: "When a man was to give the tithe of his sheep or calves to God, he was to shut up the whole flock in one fold, in which there was one

narrow door capable of letting out one at a time. The owner, about to give the tenth to the Lord, stood by the door with a rod in his hand, the end of which was dipped with vermilion, or red ocher. The mothers of those lambs or calves stood without: the door being opened, the young ones ran out to join themselves with their dams; and as they passed out the owner stood with his rod over them, and counted one, two, three, four, five, &c., and when the tenth came, he touched it with his colored rod, by which it was distinguished to be the tithe calf, sheep, &c., and whether poor or lean, perfect or blemished, that was received as the legitimate tithe." The reader need not be informed that the law requiring the tithe must, to say the least, be as ancient as the custom which relates to it.

It is worthy of particular attention, that the evidences afforded in these two verses are entirely distinct in their nature. In the former, the tithe is spoken of as an immutable claim of God upon man's possessions. In the latter, it is introduced as a thing well-known, and in connection with the command to obey it, the divine sanction is put upon an existing custom by which the Lord's tithe was separated from the rest. Now we may

be assured that this was not accidental. The Sovereign Ruler stated this law in the most appropriate terms, and of design furnished us with this accumulated and varied evidence that it is of perpetual obligation.

We are now prepared to submit the question to the reader, whether our position, that this law, as given by Moses, is still in force, is not fairly and fully sustained. We have seen that the nature of this law, as well as its perfect distinctness from the application of the tithe, and especially its publication some twenty years before the tithe was given to the Levites, proves decisively that it belongs to the moral law, no part of which has passed away. And we have also seen that this law, as proclaimed upon Mount Sinai, is stated in terms which imply, beyond a doubt, both its priority and perpetuity; yea, which unequivocally express its ceaseless obligation.

We see further that our two positions—the first, that this law existed in patriarchal times, and the second, that it is a part of the moral law given by Moses—join the one upon the other, thereby mutually strengthening each other, and constituting one solid, immovable basis in support of its religious obligation upon the Christian.

This law has also the support of several strong presumptive evidences. But we have room for only a brief allusion to these.

The supposition is obviously unreasonable and the suggestion of selfishness, that God expects less of the Christian than he did of the Jew. Just the reverse would be a more natural expectation. No reason can be given for so many and so large assessments as were made upon the possessions of the Jew, except that it was demanded by his own interests. A much less expensive form of worship would doubtless have answered every other purpose than that of protecting him against selfishness. Now the demands of fallen human nature are the same under the Christian as under the Mosaic dispensation; and, in addition to this, the glorious enterprise of the world's salvation has been made dependent upon the Christian. All the Christian can possibly give is needed in the work assigned to him of evangelizing the world. Circumstances then seem to require of the Christian much more than they did of the Jew. Shall we not rather say, that in the great commission to the Church, God calls on her for more?

Again: no reason can be discovered for such a law three thousand years ago which

exists not now. The rich and the poor then needed some law prescribing the minimum proportion, and they need it equally now, as is evident from the reluctance with which the majority of professed Christians give even a twentieth of their income. Many, indeed, who give less than a twentieth toward the support of preaching in their own vicinity, and for home charities, would scarcely give anything for the Missionary, Tract, Sunday School, and Bible causes but for the most persevering efforts of their pastor, and the committee and collectors appointed as his assistants. Some, doubtless, there will always be, who will contrive to rob God of a part of his tithe; but when the conviction shall once become prevalent, as it certainly will if it is truth, that a tenth of all our possessions, as well as a seventh of all our time, is holy unto the Lord, every true Christian will faithfully bring the increase to his treasury. This alone would multiply the religious offerings of the Church as a whole threefold, and in many places much more than this. But this is not all. Having learned what liberality is, the Church would begin cheerfully to bring her free-will offerings to the Lord, and the armies of the Redeemer would be enabled, ere long,

to go forth to glorious conquest into all lands, and subject the world to his dominion. But is there a reasonable prospect of ever accomplishing this while the Church has no definite apprehension of the divine claims upon her possessions? We need not labor to convince the reader that a general acknowledgment of this law would immensely increase the beneficent contributions of the Church, as well as give them a more strictly religious character. The follower of Christ would then no longer wait for some thrilling missionary appeal to rouse him to action. In the income of every week, whether much or little, he would hear the voice of God, and conscience, once awake, would demand with authority the full measure of Christian liberality.

We have all along marked the correspondence between the evidences for this institution and for the Sabbath. Both are positive institutions. Both were given by Moses as distinct statutes years before the giving of the ceremonial law prescribing the method of observing the one and of appropriating the other. Both make a real claim upon us—the one to a tenth of our property, the other to a seventh of our time—entirely distinct from all ceremonies, which proves

that they belong to the moral law, and have not passed away. Both, as given by Moses, are stated in terms which express a perpetual obligation, and imply both their priority and perpetuity. There are glimpses of both in patriarchal history, and traces of both in widely-separated heathen nations—facts which can only be accounted for on the hypothesis that they were enjoined upon man at a very early period. Neither is formally commanded in the New Testament. We ought rather to say that neither is revoked in the New Testament. On the contrary, the New Testament virtually assumes the existence and obligation of both.

It will here naturally occur to the reader that the tithe is not enjoined in the decalogue, while the Sabbath is. We admit freely that this fact renders the general obligation of the Sabbath a little the more obvious; in other words, that it is not so easy to overlook or evade the question of its universality as in case of the tithe. But because the precepts of the decalogue cannot escape attention, and their obligation hardly admits of question, it by no means follows that every other Old Testament precept is void. The Christian has no more reason for such an inference than the Jew had. All



that part of the law which is in any respect of a moral nature, wherever recorded, and whether expressed in distinct statutes or involved with the ceremonial law, remains in full force. But if we do not read the whole law attentively, and with an honest and earnest desire to learn its claims upon us, we shall not be likely to discriminate between the moral and the ceremonial part. We shall be in great danger of neglecting the law itself, as well as the temporarily prescribed form of observing it—of casting aside the genuine fruit, as well as the husk which was designed to protect it during the process of maturing. When we find a precept without the decalogue, it is always proper to ask the question whether it is merely ceremonial. Now, as we have seen, the evidence is demonstrative that the statute under consideration is distinct from the ceremonial law. Why it was not recorded with the precepts of the decalogue we are not bound to answer. There may have been reasons in the divine mind which are unknown to us; yet, if we mistake not, there may be found a clear and satisfactory reason in the difference between these two institutions.

Since the institution of the tithe conflicts

more directly with our selfishness than that of the Sabbath, and affords an occasion for a fuller test of candor, it accords with the known principles of the divine government that the occasion should be improved by submitting more to our investigation. Besides, in this case the only question with which selfishness is much concerned, is whether the law is obligatory upon us. After making the sacrifice—laying aside the Lord's tithe—one can hardly desire to apply it otherwise than as he directs. If we could not contrive to doubt its obligation, then not only would there be little or no opportunity for the exercise of candor on our part, but obedience would be almost a necessity. The case with the Sabbath is quite the reverse. All rejoice in it as a day of rest from ordinary labor. Even Atheism struck a fatal blow against her own power when she abolished it in France. Human nature speedily revolted against the tyrant, and demanded its restoration. Selfishness is almost exclusively concerned here with the question how strictly the Sabbath should be observed, and the conspicuous place in which it is enjoined brings this chief question distinctly and vividly to view.

Thus we perceive, that while giving the .

Sabbath a place in the decalogue is promotive of its purpose,—that is, secures to man, as a probationer, its highest advantages,—to have made the institution of the tithe so conspicuous would have been counteractive of its purpose. In other words, it would have made obedience so nearly compulsory, that instead of strengthening man to act the part of a moral agent—to do his probationary work—it would have tended rather “to crush him into a hypocrite, or to terrify him into a maniac.” Man cannot face the command of the infinite Jehovah with a *direct* refusal to obey.

But though the obligation of the tithe is less obvious than that of the Sabbath, we have no right to admit that it is any less conclusive after investigation. There is no real inferiority in its evidences. We feel justified in the conclusion that when both these institutions have been placed with equal distinctness before the mind, the same degree of candor and devotion which will secure the *proper* observance of the one, will also insure a prompt and practical acknowledgment of the other.

If we were in controversy with the caviler, we should probably meet the objection that some have no land, flocks, and herds. There

is a chance here for the unwilling to evade conviction. But we need not waste a paragraph to convince the Christian that we escape none of the claims of Heaven by receiving our income through some of the channels of modern enterprise.

The question will, however, honestly arise whether those who are in extreme poverty, or in debt, are not exempted from the claims of the tithe. We yield to the reader the same right which we claim for ourself, of deciding this question in the exercise of his own judgment. Some, whose opinion is entitled to much more weight than that of the writer, have answered in the affirmative. Yet we feel compelled to dissent from this opinion. If we rightly apprehend its teachings, the Bible represents a tenth of our income as well as a seventh of our time as unchangeably the Lord's. If the nine-tenths are insufficient to meet our stern necessities, it may be right for us to borrow if we have a reasonable prospect of paying. If we cannot do this, we may lawfully and honorably appeal to the benevolence of those who are more largely supplied with earthly good than we are. If our heavenly Father should permit us to suffer want after resorting to all lawful means to obtain a supply, he will not fail,

if we commit our cause to him, to overrule the consequent suffering for our eternal good. But on no account, as we view the subject, can we be justified in employing any part of the Lord's tithe for any other than charitable and religious purposes. No; we must not apply it even to the payment of a debt. We have no right to rob God to pay Cæsar. All the tithe is holy unto the Lord.

The subject now is the duty of giving the tithe, and not its tendency to thrift. We ought, however, in this connection, to call to mind the sure word of divine promise, which fully justifies the conclusion that he who freely renders unto God that which is his, will, in general, be much more likely to meet the claims of his creditors, and to secure a comfortable supply for himself and family. Robbing God, as the Bible teaches, and experience demonstrates, is in all respects unprofitable as well as wrong.

But before leaving this subject we would again remind the reader that the tithe is not the measure of Christian liberality. Upon the latter subject we have spoken at length in a previous chapter. Yet an additional remark or two seems called for in this place. The tithe is only that part of all our gains

which God claims as his in the same sense in which he claims the first of every seven days. It is our duty not only to keep the Sabbath holy, but also to devote a portion of each day to divine worship. But the responsibility of determining what this portion shall be, whether one or three hours of each of the six days, devolves upon us. So it is only a tenth of the property over which God makes us his stewards which he has specially reserved as his own. But he has very explicitly and emphatically made it our duty, in general, to give much more. As in the analogous case, however, he holds us responsible to judge how much more, in view of the general teachings of his word, and the indications of his providence.

He who worships only on Sunday is only a Sunday Christian. So he who gives only the tithe when he can give more is only a tithe Christian. In other words, he is not a Bible Christian. Even of the Jew two or three times this proportion were required. He was required to give what are sometimes called the second and third tithes, besides various smaller benefactions, and in addition to them all to bring liberal free-will offerings to the Lord. These requirements, however, it should be observed, were placed on entirely

different ground from that of *the* tithe. None of them are enjoined in statutes distinct from the ceremonial law. They are not like *the* tithe, spoken of as an unchangeable divine reservation. Perhaps, indeed, the three tithes were not entirely distinct from each other. They do not, then, make it our duty to lay aside from our income a second and third tithe, &c., in the very order prescribed for the Jew. Yet we may learn from them this plain lesson, that it is our duty to give at least with equal liberality; that is, if we are equally able, to give as large a proportion as was required of the Jew, which cannot be much less than a third of all.

But we have seen that the Gospel, while it repeals not the institution of the tithe any more than that of the Sabbath, exalts the standard of liberality above that of Judaism, making it the duty and privilege of the Christian to give a larger proportion than the aggregate of all the requirements of the Jew. Thus the Gospel perfects the law. The Christian standard of liberality as earnestly advocated and exemplified by our own Wesley, is this: "HAVING FIRST GAINED ALL YOU CAN, AND SECONDLY SAVED ALL YOU CAN, THEN GIVE ALL YOU CAN."

But let not the general duty of giving all

we can be resorted to as a covert from the specific duty of giving a tenth. The evidences we have been considering in this chapter prove not that it is the duty of somebody else to give a third, but that it is our own duty promptly to bring to the Lord's treasury his own tithe. We beseech the friends of Christ, as they love his cause, yea, we warn them, in view of the great day of judicial scrutiny, not to shuffle this law under any vague generalization. We claim no authority for our words; but the word of God is supreme.

If the reader assents to the argument we have introduced—if he admits that it establishes so much as a clear probability in favor of this law—he is bound also to admit that it is obligatory upon him, that of all the increase accruing from his present possessions, as well as of all the fruits of his industry—in a word, that of all the gifts of Providence, it is his duty to regard the first tenth as holy unto the Lord, and to apply it with religious care to the relief of his poor and the promotion of his cause. Let this definite law come home to the individual consciences both of the rich and the poor, and more will be gained than ever can be by mere general appeals.

The writer is by no means disposed to record



hard things against those who have not hitherto recognized the obligation of the tithe. The Church, as a whole, is, indeed, extremely culpable. But it is impossible to judge how far particular individuals are in fault; and, if it were otherwise, it would not be our part to throw stones. For ages the Church was almost wholly unconscious of the duty of evangelizing the world. Yet, during those ages, there were doubtless many sincere Christians. Even now it is said that on the continent of Europe loose views prevail respecting the obligation of the Sabbath. We do not conclude, however, that among those who are affected with this error there are none whose hearts are consecrated to the Christian cause. Indeed, many persons of undoubted piety connected with the various branches of the Church in our own country have a very imperfect view of the claims of the Sabbath. Still, the Sabbath is the Lord's, as strictly as though all Christians had a correct apprehension of it; and so is the tithe. All true Christians are disciples, and the disciple stands acquitted so long as he inquires diligently and candidly, and promptly adopts every new lesson in his practice.

## CHAPTER IX.

THIRD SCRIPTURAL RULE—WE ARE REQUIRED  
TO RESPOND TO THE CLAIMS OF THIS DUTY ON  
EACH SABBATH, GIVING IN PROPORTION AS  
GOD PROSPERS US.

THE foregoing chapters have guided us to the conclusion, that the standard of Christian liberality is, in all cases, found somewhere from a tenth of all our income to all we can gain by industry and save by economy. The tithe we are to acknowledge as the Lord's, because he has reserved it as his own. Between this and all we have, we are to exercise our own judgment in loyalty to the general teachings of Scripture. At the call of Providence we are to be ever ready to devote all our possessions to the cause of charity and religion, and under no circumstances are we to retain any part of the increase without a high religious purpose; that is, unless it is our deliberate conviction that this is required by the general good. We are to hoard up nothing, but to use all as faithful stewards of God.

It now remains only to be determined how

often, and at what periods, the question should come up for distinct consideration, What proportion ought I to give? To this question Inspiration furnishes us a definite answer: "UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK LET EVERY ONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM." 1 Cor. xvi, 2.

It will not be questioned by the Christian that this command is obligatory upon all. The only query will be whether it is to be understood as enjoining upon us a form to be generally observed, or only as requiring system and deliberation in our beneficent contributions. The latter seems generally to be taken for granted. We would speak with becoming modesty and deference to the opinions of others; yet we would not shrink from a distinct expression of what seems to us to be the truth. We cannot imagine upon what principle this rule can fairly admit of such wholesale generalization. Let us be understood. It is plain, from the nature of the rule, that it cannot be obligatory upon all in the precise form in which it is stated. It requires not impossibilities. But because the circumstances of some are such that it would be impossible for them to obey it to the letter, surely it does not follow that they are justified in totally disregarding

its form; much less does it follow that those whose circumstances admit an observance of it in form, are at liberty to substitute for it some entirely different rule of their own invention. As we view the subject, this rule is obligatory to the letter upon all to whose circumstances it is adapted, and upon all others with such modifications as their circumstances render necessary.

Our position here, though not in accordance with the general impression, will not, we presume, in the mind of the Church generally, conflict with any settled opinions, nor encounter any violent prejudices. Hence an elaborate defense of it is uncalled for. The evidences in its support are within the comprehension of all. We shall state them briefly, and submit the question of their validity to the judgment of the Church.

We remark, first, that some rule of this nature, as well as of that requiring the tithe, seems needed by the Church. At what stated periods this duty should engage special attention is one of the questions which human reason cannot answer, and one which we may well desire should be decided by infinite Wisdom; and more especially when we remember that it involves our own

spiritual growth, and the prosperity of Christ's kingdom.

Such a rule is also a natural expectation in view of the importance of unity of action. The drafts upon the treasury of the Lord are as regular as the wants of those who are engaged in the Christian service. With equal regularity should the treasury of the Lord be replenished. But so long as there are no stated periods at which Christians generally lay by in store for the Christian cause, there must be great irregularity and uncertainty in the supplies, and the cause will be sadly embarrassed. Now the rule before us supplies us with a perfect antidote to this evil. We might suppose that common-sense would lead an earnest Church to adopt some rule of the kind. Indeed, in every enterprising Church the members are accustomed, either weekly, or monthly, or quarterly, to pay their proportion toward the support of preaching, and at the same or other regularly recurring periods to give to the cause of Christian charity. Any such plan immensely increases the efficiency of a Church. But how much greater must be the advantage of the adoption, by the Churches generally, of a rule divinely wise and divinely authoritative. Such is the rule before us.

Again: we infer that this rule is binding in its specific form from the extent to which the apostle applied it. "As I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, so do ye." Now the apostle was guided by inspiration, both in originally enjoining this rule upon the Churches of Galatia, and in repeating the injunction to the Corinthian Church. These Churches probably embraced several hundreds, and perhaps some thousands of Christians, and it will not be doubted that of them, at least, obedience to the rule in form was required so far as it was consistent with their circumstances. Nor can it be doubted that this particular form was chosen for wise reasons.

Had the apostle, to meet some pressing emergency, simply ordered a collection on one Christian Sabbath, the lesson would be very different. But he commanded these Christians to lay by in store Sabbath after Sabbath. One reason assigned by him is, that there might be no gatherings when he came; that is, that their gifts might not be prompted by the casual impulses awakened by his presence and his eloquence. This particular form was unquestionably better adapted to the spiritual wants of those early Christians than any other, and why not to

the wants of Christians now? It did not exactly suit the convenience of all those Christians any more than it does of all Christians now. An observance of it is probably quite as generally convenient now as it was then. Certainly we are warranted in the conclusion, that, in proportion to its adaptation, it is as obligatory upon us as it was upon the primitive Christians.

Again, it should not be overlooked that it is form which this rule requires. It assumes the duty of religious charities, and simply points out in unequivocal terms the proper manner of providing the means. It prescribes the frequency and the particular days upon which the subject should receive distinct attention, making it one of the duties of each Christian Sabbath. Now, let it be remembered that this rule was not given in view of any prejudice of the times, nor to meet any local or temporary want, but that it relates to a great universal duty of religion, and to the sublimest enterprise in the universe, and the conclusion is plain that it is as binding upon the modern as it was upon the ancient Churches, that is, binding upon all *just so far* as circumstances do not clearly render it impracticable.

Again, we venture the suggestion that

this rule has a wider adaptation than any other rule relating to the frequency and the times of giving could have. We confidently infer this, in respect to those Christians to whom it was immediately addressed, from the fact of its inspiration, and we can imagine no reason why it should not be as well adapted to other Christians as to them. Human laws are often experiments. This is the dictate of Infinite Wisdom. The conclusion is unavoidable, that it perfectly meets the want for which it was intended, and is as generally applicable as, from the nature of the case, any rule requiring unity of action can be.

But we shall see, upon reflection, that this rule commends itself to common-sense. It is not so specific as to circumscribe its application within narrow limits. It does not require the Christian to give a specified sum, nor to make any immediate appropriation of his offerings, nor to place them in any general treasury, but simply to lay by him in store as the Lord prospers him from week to week, leaving the questions of the amount, and of the appropriation or deposit, to be determined by circumstances.

The frequency here prescribed corresponds with the weekly division of time, and



the only division which revelation enjoins. Besides, of all the days of the week, the Sabbath is generally the most convenient for this duty. Regularly recurring between the secular weeks, it affords the most favorable opportunity for the inquiry, How has God prospered me during the week? The Sabbath is also a convenient time, because, upon that day, we are free from ordinary care and toil. It affords us ample time to give the subject deliberate attention.

It is not to be denied, however, that at first view there seem to be many exceptions to the applicability of this rule. A small minority receive their income so often as once a week. Comparatively few always have money at hand when the Sabbath arrives. It is often impracticable exactly to estimate either the expenses or the gains of the week. Some are engaged in enterprises the results of which must remain unknown for months or years. In view of these facts, it must be admitted that this rule is not always entirely convenient. But must not the same admission be made also in respect to every duty of religion? Christianity does not propose our present convenience as the principal thing. Self-denial—subjecting our own convenience to the will of God and the

general good—is one of the prominent and essential requirements of our probation.

Though salvation is by grace through faith, yet if we would retain the priceless boon we must consent to much inconvenience in time. Some think it inconvenient to give, at any time, into the treasury of the Lord. It is sometimes quite inconvenient to devote the first day of the week to religious purposes. Many persons find it so inconvenient to be Christians that they delay the whole matter to the close of life. The strait gate, which is the only entrance to the kingdom of God, does not suit any one's convenience. The indolent man even frets at the inconvenience of providing for the daily recurring wants of his own family.

There arise, then, from the circumstances in such cases as are above alluded to, no objections to giving weekly attention to this subject which do not exalt convenience above duty, weigh equally against a discharge of other acknowledged obligations, and involve gross infidelity to the Christian cause.

Let it be ever kept in mind that the question is not whether the duty to which this rule relates may not be wholly neglected till we can definitely estimate our gains and

our expenses, and attend to it without inconvenience, but whether, admitting *our constant obligation as copartners in the work of the Lord*, this rule is not a practicable one in the discharge of that obligation, and attended with as little inconvenience as any rule can be which does not in some respect compromise the great duty itself.

The circumstances of some may not always admit of conformity to the exact letter of this rule ; but, if they are disposed to do so, they can conform to it with only slight, unessential modifications. On each Sabbath they can give prayerful attention to the subject. If they cannot exactly estimate the expenses of the week, they can generally, with a little attention, know their actual expenditures, which is equally to the purpose. If they have not all the facts before them relating to their prosperity, they can bring such an offering to the Lord as seems liberal in view of those facts which are known. They can calculate the probabilities just as they do in regulating the weekly outlays for their families, and give in proportion, never fixing the proportion below the prescribed minimum—a tenth of that which is appropriated for all purposes. If they are obliged to live on credit, still

they can credit a proportionate sum to the account of charity and religion, paying the amount when their income is received. If the uncertainties of their business require special economy, this very system of regularly crediting a portion to the Lord will contribute to the desired object. Unquestionably, in a majority of cases, the aggregate debt for current expenses and to the cause of religious charity would not exceed that which, in the absence of such a system, would be incurred for the former object alone.

But if there be occasionally a Christian who would economize as closely without any such system as with it, still it is too plain to admit of question, that, so long as the prospects of his business justify him in obtaining on credit a constant supply of temporal things for himself and family, he should be equally constant and liberal in his plans for providing for the higher wants of the spiritual nature, and for the promotion of the great enterprises of Christian benevolence. Of course, giving attention to the subject on each Sabbath would not supersede the propriety and duty of bringing an unusually large offering to the Lord when it should be found that success had crowned

his enterprises, any more than comfortably feeding and clothing his children during the period of uncertainty would lead him to forget the generous bestowments expected by them on the joyful day which reveals his prosperity.

We find another valid argument in support of our position in the substantial agreement of this rule with the requirements of the former dispensations. It is highly probable that, from the first age of the world, one of the religious duties required of man on each Sabbath was that of offering a portion of his possessions to the Lord. It is certain that sacrifices were required on the Sabbath under the Mosaic dispensation, and there is no reason to doubt that the same was true during the patriarchal ages. Commentators concur in the opinion that Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord on the Sabbath. This is inferred from the phrase rendered "in process of time," which literally signifies "at the end of the days," or "at the cutting off of days;" that is, as Dr. Wayland remarks, "at the close, as we should say, of a section of days; a very natural expression for the end of a week."

Indeed, until the great offering of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world, sac-

rifices were connected with the prescribed form of worship, and the Sabbath was always the day specially devoted to this purpose.

It is true that the ancient sacrifices were typical; but they were none the less offerings of property. The acknowledgment of the pious patriarch or Jew of his dependence for salvation from sin upon a vicarious atonement, and his devotement of a portion of his property to the Lord, though one in the outward form, were two distinct religious acts. They are such in their nature. Under the Christian dispensation these acts have been separated. Yet, since both belong to religion, it is but natural that both should still be required on the day specially devoted to religious purposes.

In primitive times each patriarch acted as priest to his own family, and brought his offerings directly to the Lord. He paid his tithe or tithes in the very act of worship. When this custom was modified under the law, as published by Moses, by the institution of public worship, and sacrifices were offered for the people only by priests from a particular family, then, as we are informed by Josephus and Philo, the pious Jew regularly brought his tithes for the poor and

for the temple to the synagogue in which he worshiped on every Sabbath.

Thus we find good reason to believe that, from the days of Adam to the time this rule was recorded by the inspired apostle, the duty which it enjoins was individually observed by the truly pious on each recurring Sabbath. What less can we infer from this than a clear probability that this New Testament rule is a republication of one of the immutable laws of God to man, only so far modified in its form as to adapt it to the Gospel dispensation?

Finally, we observe that offerings to the Lord seem highly appropriate as a Sabbath duty. We have already dwelt at length upon the eminently religious nature of this duty. It is a grateful and practical acknowledgment of God as the giver of all our blessings; it is suited to remind us of our constant dependence upon a crucified Saviour, whose religion our contributions aim to support; and it is adapted to take us out of self and to bring us into union with Christ, and into lively sympathy with his mission of mercy to our benighted and suffering fellow-men. In a word, it is an essential part of "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father." How befitting, then, that

special attention should be required to this duty on the Sabbath. On no other day are its claims likely to be so fully realized, and on no other day is it so likely to be discharged in the spirit of true religion.

Religion, indeed, is the very purpose for which the Sabbath was instituted, and shall this great duty of religion be omitted on that day? Worship is not the whole of religion. Dissociated from a practical acknowledgment of God, it degenerates into a stale, disgusting sentimentalism. Religion requires action as well as emotion—deeds as well as words. It becomes us in all things to show our faith by our works. Our words of thanksgiving should be accompanied by a generous thank-offering to the treasury of the Lord. We must not only pray for the poor, but aid in relieving them. We must show our zeal for the Redeemer's kingdom by contributing to its support and extension.

Thus we see that these great duties of religion—worship and offerings to the Lord—are mutually dependent. From this we might justly infer that the one should receive attention on the Sabbath as well as the other. But we are not left here to inference. God has in his word indissolubly



joined them together. Let no man presume to put them asunder.

We have not urged these considerations for the purpose of adding to the authority of this Scriptural rule. Its authority rests on its inspiration by the Holy Ghost. But are we not fully warranted in concluding from these collateral evidences that this rule is binding in form?

We have now set before the mind of the reader what we understand to be the Bible style of giving. We have not found an answer to every question which the hesitating mind suggests; but we have found the word of God sufficiently full and explicit to point out a plain path to those who earnestly desire to know the claims of God on their possessions, and to meet them.

## CHAPTER X.

THE REQUIRED BENEFICENCE OBLIGATORY UPON  
THE MINISTRY.

THE Bible law of giving, like the Sabbath, was made for *man*, and upon man makes its requisitions. As every man is its object, so every man is its subject. No one is excused from the duty of giving, or denied the privilege, because of profession, position, or other adventitious circumstances. Our reasonings, then, are manifestly as applicable to the ministry as to the laity.

As the Church is waking up to a great reform on this subject, we have deemed it not improper modestly, yet earnestly, to inquire whether we, as ministers of the cross, occupy the right position. It is true, if faithful to our calling, we actually give our entire services to the cause of the Redeemer; and, in doing so, we not unfrequently exchange the income of lucrative stations for a scanty support. Of course, however, this does not release us from the claims of God on our present income, such as it is. God does not require of us a portion of that of which we

might rob him in some station to which he has not called us, nor of that which is honestly due to us from the Church, but a portion of that of which we become the actual possessors.

Many of us, doubtless, do give a liberal portion according to the general standard; but we cannot doubt that a thorough investigation will lead to a settled conviction, that we may and ought to participate in this great reform by taking higher ground in both our teachings and our practice.

No detailed restatement of this law is demanded here. We need only allude to the well-known fact in Jewish history, that the Levites were required to give a tithe of their tithe, even as the people gave a tithe of the product of their industry. From this arises, at least, a reasonable presumption that this law is as obligatory upon the ministry as upon the laity.

Now the obvious inference from the obligation of this law upon us is, that *obedience* to it *is practicable*. God requires not impossibilities. The evidence which establishes the duty of observing the law establishes also its consistency. The minister must not, more than other men, expect to find it congenial to his human nature, or in harmony with his

convenience or inclination; for one of the grand purposes of the law is our discipline by self-denial. But the faithful Christian pastor needs not exhortation to induce him to give to the full extent of his convictions. He wants only the bidding of his Lord, ever rejoicing in the assurance that obedience is the highest wisdom.

True, the apparent difficulties are great; but they dwindle before a candid and prayerful examination of the subject.

Deeply sensible are we that the salary of ministers is generally inadequate to their station. But this is equally true of many in other walks in life; and if our limited resources render it impossible for us to conform to this rule, the same reasoning will excuse great numbers of our people. The income of a large portion of the Church may be safely estimated at less than that of the ministry. The apology of which we speak, then, if adopted by the Church, would be ruinously felt not only by our Bible, Missionary, Tract, and Sunday-School societies, but in the very support of the ministry itself. The minister must not even whisper the notion that obedience is impossible. If the station in life occupied by the pastor has increased expenditures—and it doubtless has—they

are of such a nature that the people do not appreciate them ; and, in despite of all remonstrances, the layman will wrest our logic to his own destruction and ours also.

But a life of obedience to this law—and, indeed, to every law of God—is the very means of removing the difficulties in the way of obedience. Enlarged liberality on our part cannot fail gradually, and in the end greatly, to increase the liberality of the Church in remunerating our services. All the piety and good sense of the Church is a pledge of this. In some cases the response might not, at first, be general ; but we hesitate not to affirm that every branch of the Church of Christ would soon feel, and practically acknowledge, the force of a noble example of liberality in their pastor. Christians could not but feel that such a man needs and deserves more than one who, giving nothing himself, only murmurs about his salary. Besides, he never fails of a higher place in the confidence of all who know him.

We cannot substantiate these views by an appeal to general experience ; for, unfortunately, we have not tried this great duty sufficiently to have an experimental demonstration that it is also a great privilege. Ex-

perience, however, is not wholly wanting on the subject. We have just learned the following fact in the case of a brother now widely known and as widely esteemed. On going to a new station, he found the Church sorely burdened, as it seemed to them, by a little debt. Finding this an obstacle to the success of his labors, he proposed that an immediate effort be made to cancel it, and set the people an example by contributing himself. The thing was speedily done. Soon after a delegation from the estimating committee waited on him to inquire of him how much salary he would need—a courtesy which he had not been accustomed to receive, and they, probably, as unaccustomed to extend. They informed him of their estimate of the previous year, but added, that if he intended to give on as liberal a scale as he had commenced he would need much more. On this principle they made out their estimate for him, all of which was paid, and fully one-third more than the estimate.

In the above case the response may have been unusually prompt and generous; yet it furnishes us an illustration of a law which is universal in its workings. Its tendency is, first, to secure more liberal estimates, and then to increase the probability that they will

be fully and seasonably paid ; thus in every respect elevating the standard of ministerial support, and enabling the pastor to indulge more freely in the luxury of doing good.

Let our conduct forever abolish the idea now so extensively entertained in the Churches, that we are *ex officio* excused from giving, and our people, if they have the spirit of Christ, in fixing our salaries, will estimate not only for our traveling and table expenses, house-rent and fuel, the maintenance and education of our children, the purchase of books and other things needful in our profession, but also for the demands of Christian charity. If they are God's people as well as ours, they will not omit his part in the estimate.

But we must not leave out of the account the doctrine of divine Providence, and the special promises of God relating to this subject. We need not introduce them here. They are familiar, and we have often quoted them in appealing to others. They decide the question that, as a general rule, at least, God bestows liberally upon those who return a liberal portion into his treasury. No one can believe the word of God and doubt this. Its promises in all their exceeding greatness and preciousness are ours.

But it would be unwise to blind ourselves to the moral certainty that obedience to this great duty of religion will, in many cases, subject us at first to special inconvenience. Bible giving may, for a time, render us unable to sustain our position as might be best for the Church; and it may cost a temporary sacrifice of comfort to ourselves and our families. But if we have acted well our part, it is not our fault that our stations are not supported in a style which the cause of religion demands; and in the path of duty we can well afford self-denial, so far as our Lord sees fit to permit it. He does not forget his faithful laborers. The very hairs of their heads are all numbered, and he will assuredly overrule all for their good. Nor will the fulfillment of his promises relating to temporal things be long delayed. The very inconveniences referred to he will employ as a means of directing public attention to the advantages of an ample ministerial support.

But, after all, is not the chief difficulty which we encounter in this duty, as in the case of other Christians, to be found in the possessory passion? This passion is not in itself wrong. It is a natural endowment—a part of the man himself—and becomes an evil only when degraded into selfishness.



Like every other passion, it was given for noble ends; and in the pursuit of high moral purposes, in subserviency to the will of God, it may be innocently indulged. God designed to make us happy in the possession as well as in the use of property. But inseparable from the blessing in this our trial state, is the struggle which it costs us to surrender our possessions—a struggle which constitutes one of the grand turning-points in our career as probationers for eternal life. The greatness of this conflict increases with the increase of our possessions; for it is evident that the more we have, the more the room for the exercise of this passion, as not only the sum with which we are required to part is greater, but the required proportion is also greater. Obviously, the only means of conquest here is action—immediate, persevering, systematic action—the cultivation, in reliance upon divine grace, of a fixed habit of giving—a permanent subjection of this passion to the dominion of supreme love to God.

Turn now to the magnificent results.

The universal adoption of this rule by the ministry of our Church would, at once, immensely increase the contributions to our benevolent enterprises. There are now about five thousand itinerant ministers in

the Methodist Episcopal Church, receiving probably an aggregate annual income from their profession of about two millions of dollars.\* A single tenth of this would amount to two hundred thousand dollars—a sum equal to the voluntary contributions of the whole Church for the missionary cause the last year, or more than two-thirds of the entire contributions of the Church to all her benevolent societies.

But under this rule we would give more than a tenth, for some of us have been blessed of God with wealth; and proportionate giving, according to the divine requirements, would swell the amount by at least scores of thousands. It will scarcely be thought extravagant to affirm that the Bible law, reduced to practice, would produce from the ministry alone a sum equal to all that is now contributed by the Church to the Bible, Missionary, Tract, and Sunday-School societies.†

But this is scarcely the beginning of the glorious consequences flowing from our obe-

\* Including house-rent and perquisites, we think this a low estimate.

† In making this estimate, we would by no means be understood that our entire contributions should be directed to these enterprises. The temporal wants of God's poor should not be forgotten.

dience to God's blessed law. Upon our example more than upon our teaching depends the question, whether the undeveloped resources of the Church—her conscience toward God, her hoarded treasures, and her greater wealth of industry and business-talent—shall be called forth in the great work of carrying forward the triumphs of the Redeemer. Let us, as we are required, exemplify our teachings—be “ensamples to the flock,” “in all things show ourselves patterns of good works,”—and the people, aroused by the zeal and self-sacrifice of their ministers, will themselves begin to rise toward the Gospel standard, and with a lavish hand to supply the means for the world's evangelization. Who that is a follower of Jesus Christ can hesitate for a moment to make the sacrifice needful to secure such stupendous results?

But neither the consistency of giving according to the revealed standard with our own interest, nor the impulses of hearts thrilled with desires for usefulness, will divert the attention of the minister of Jesus Christ from the higher motive of religious obligation. The great question with us, as with the entire Church, is, What are the requirements of God in respect to our prop-

erty? In endeavoring to answer this question, we need not repeat that we arrogate not to ourself infallibility. Our only claim is that we have investigated carefully and answered honestly.

We have not, however, found the path of duty on this subject, as it seems to us to be marked out on the pages of Inspiration, wholly untrodden by the ministry.

While it is an occasion of deep regret that the attention of so small a portion of the good men and true among us has been aroused to their high calling on this subject, we are grateful to be enabled, in closing this chapter, not only to refer the reader to the familiar examples of Wesley, Baxter, Doddridge, Watts, and Oberlin, none of whom gave less than a tenth, and some much more, but also to present a recent example from our own ranks which we think worthy of universal imitation. We refer to the late Rev. Richard Treffry, jun., of the British Wesleyan Connection, author of an excellent essay on Covetousness, and equally eminent for talent, piety, and usefulness. We quote from his *Memoirs*, pp. 272, 273 :—

“The liberality which he recommended to others in his writings he exemplified in his conduct. Though he had a large and in-

creasing family, with a scanty and precarious income, yet he conscientiously laid by a tenth of all the money that came into his hands, from whatever source it proceeded, to give to the poor, or to further the cause of Christianity; and to this he attributed the wonderful providence of God in raising up for him so many friends, who contributed voluntarily and cheerfully to supply his wants. About a month before his death, after having received a small sum of money, he said to his wife, 'Have you tithed that money?' When she answered in the affirmative, he said, 'That is right; continue to do so, and you will ever have the blessing of God upon you; but the very day you depart from this practice your providential supplies will fail.' One day their funds ran so low that his wife told him she was apprehensive she must go to the poor-bag (which happened at that time to be richer than usual) to supply the exigencies of their family, when he said, 'Wait until all your resources are exhausted;' but before that period arrived some unexpected supply came, and the money that was sacredly appropriated to the cause of benevolence remained undiminished. \* \* \* \* A few days before his death he remarked to his wife

how tenderly his heavenly Father dealt with him. 'Do you not see,' said he, 'how the promise of God is accomplished in my behalf?' 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.' "

## CHAPTER XI.

THE REQUIRED BENEFICENCE PROMOTES THE  
WELL-BEING OF OUR FELLOW-MEN IN THE  
PRESENT LIFE.

IN the foregoing chapters we have shown what we understand to be the beneficence required in the Bible, that whatever be our station it makes its demands upon us all according to our means, and have urged compliance chiefly in view of our obligations as objects of the beneficence of God, and subjects of his government, alluding to other considerations only so far as has seemed necessary to obviate the difficulties which naturally occur to the mind from a partial survey of the subject. We would now extend our view to another class of motives which our divine benefactor and ruler has furnished us in the human relations in which he has placed us. In the present chapter we make our appeal in view of the good results accruing to our fellow-men in this life.

Of course, we are not understood to refer

exclusively to temporal things. Earthly possessions are the least of all the good things which make even this life desirable, and in the absence of higher good they betray man into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown him in destruction and perdition, and pierce him through with many sorrows. Merely to provide for the outward man, however bountifully, would not be true beneficence. The disease at the heart is the sole cause of all the ills which afflict our race, and the Gospel of Christ is the only remedy which can reach this seat of every human malady. While the streams of misery are flowing in every direction, they demand attention; but we must not forget that their source is the depraved heart. Dry up the fountain, and the streams will stop of course. We may more fitly say, Purify the heart from depravity, and it will bountifully overflow with love, under the fertilizing influences of which all the blighted interests of humanity will resume their primeval thrift.

The prevailing ignorance of man is but a natural result of the moral gloom which overspreads the earth. It is this which blinds him to the true method of happiness



and prosperity, and the rays of the Gospel alone can penetrate and scatter this moral gloom. To attempt to accomplish this by any other means would be as foolish as to think of substituting whited walls for the beams of the sun. It is because sin has separated man from God that "the natural bond of brotherhood is severed," and with an unfeeling heart he can rob his brother of his property, his character, his liberty, and even of his life, for filthy gain; and in order that this bond may be restored in its original strength, man must experience the spiritual regeneration which the Gospel provides.

We perceive that the motive with which the Christian is here furnished is one of great power. It appeals to, and at the same time tends to the cultivation of every pure affection of the human heart. It has, indeed, the united strength of all the cords which bind society together, and the aggregate weight of all the interests of time.

With the greatest strength the Christian loves the little family circle of which he is a member. If a father, how intense his desire that his children may attain those elements of character which will secure to them respectability and influence, and qualify them to act well their part in the world, and

to be worthy examples to the generations which shall succeed them. But the father can accomplish these objects for his posterity only to the extent that he protects them against sin and error, and surrounds them with the influences of religion; and to do this he must be active in the cause of Christian beneficence. He must see, at whatever sacrifice, that a pure Gospel is preached to his children, and preached under such circumstances as to secure its strongest and most permanent influence over them. Penuriousness in the support of the Gospel, if it does not immediately destroy its influence over a family, is generally fatal to its permanency. The father who helps to starve instead of support his minister, may, in general, depend upon one of two results: either such disaffection between the minister and himself as, in a great degree, to counteract the influence which his preaching might otherwise exert; or such disrespect on the part of his family toward the minister as will render his influence powerless over them, if it does not stumble them into skepticism.

But let not the father conclude that his children are safe against the devices of Satan when he has secured faithful preaching for

them, and has brought them into such a relation to the religious teacher as to enable him to influence them. It is undoubtedly true that internal growth—the religious nurture and training of the children of the Church—is indispensable to its progress; but it is no less true that the Church can neither acquire nor retain the vitality requisite to such internal growth without aggressive effort. Aggression is one of the essential characteristics of the Church. The light of truth was not intended to be hidden under a bushel. Its treasure cannot be imprisoned in self. Besides, it should be remembered that, in most places, the tide of influence is corrupting. The majority is generally unreligious, and often irreligious; and in all places the enemy is busy in sowing tares wherever he can find a foot of unguarded soil. The Christian father, then, even from a regard for the welfare of his children for this life, must extend his efforts beyond the immediate wants of his own family, and be a liberal supporter of the preaching of the Gospel in behalf of those around him who feel no interest to provide it for themselves. Otherwise it will be impossible for him to train up his children in the way they should go, and to drive back the

rushing tide of iniquity which threatens to overwhelm them.

But it is unsafe to stop here. Just so sure as the laws of God are immutable, the father wrongs his posterity unless he is a whole-hearted Christian. His beneficence must not be circumscribed by the limits of his own neighborhood or town. His ear must ever be open to the calls of suffering humanity in all the earth; and, as a cheerful giver, he must be ready to the extent of his ability to administer relief. According to his means, he must systematically aid in supporting those religious enterprises which aim to send the rays of Gospel truth into all the dark portions of the earth. Nor is this all. He must in all respects be an example of beneficence to his children. He must early teach them to give to the needy and for the support of religion. In this respect, as in every other, he must "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

History is full of examples illustrative of this truth. We often speak of the sacrifices of our pilgrim fathers. They did make sacrifices; but God rewarded them in their posterity in so doing. Their liberality in the provisions which they made for the re-

ligious and intellectual education of their children, has been very signally returned in blessings upon all the generations which have succeeded them. This is true in respect to wealth, and intelligence, and virtue, and liberty. Beyond doubt, through the superintending care of a divine Providence, every dollar appropriated by them for these purposes has, in temporal wealth, descended to us through the generations that have lived at a large compound interest. But by means of their liberality also have descended to us the immeasurably greater blessings of general intelligence, universal facilities of education, the priceless boon of liberty, and religious privileges such as no other people upon earth have ever enjoyed. Similar blessings will certainly result to the generations that will follow us if our sacrifices shall be as true to the calls of Providence as were theirs, and shall spring from as sincere hearts. What a motive is here presented to us! Does not its appeal find a response in the heart of every Christian father? and can it fail to stimulate all who have at heart the well-being of their descendants to give liberally for every worthy object of that which God has committed to them as his stewards? How many

foolish fathers are blindly robbing the treasury of God that they may hoard up a few hundreds or thousands, which will curse their children and their children's children, who, by setting them an example of liberal and systematic beneficence, and affording them also the privilege of contributing regularly to the Christian cause, might bequeath to them the legacy of a glorious purpose of intelligence, of usefulness, of honor, and, in general, even a more ample supply of temporal possessions. How plain is the word of God on this subject: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed."

Again: the Christian is a neighbor and a citizen, and as such he feels a special interest in whatever concerns the happiness and prosperity of the hearts and homes around him, and the general welfare of the community of which he is a member. He is interested in each individual both for his own sake and for the sake of others who are affected by his influence. He who saves a young man from the disgrace of a sinful life,

and awakens him to a consciousness of the dignity of his being, at the same time saves his town or village from the intolerable curse of a degrading influence, it may be for fifty years ; and for the same period saves a good neighbor, and a worthy and useful citizen. But the result stops not here. He dries up a stream of depravity which otherwise might continue to flow for thousands of years until it should spread its polluted waters over the earth. And besides, he secures evermore the weight of this man's influence in the scale of virtue, and permanently engages his energies on the side of progress in everything which concerns human well-being. Now all this, and much more, may be effected through the example and efforts of an earnest Christian. His influence is elevating upon the entire circle of his acquaintance, and is a means of enduring good to all but those who, in despite of all which can be done for them, will persist incorrigibly in their indifference to the claims of God. But this can be said only of him who is a Christian according to the Gospel standard—one who is known by his deeds as well as his words ; who shrinks not from such personal effort as encounters difficulties ; who cheerfully subjects himself to inconvenience

and self-denial; who spares no effort to sustain the preaching of the Gospel with a liberality which will give it its highest efficiency—to provide churches suitable for the accommodation of the people; to establish Sunday schools, and to supply them with libraries; and to see that every family is furnished with the Bible and other religious reading; and who, in addition to all this, shows himself an example of beneficence by liberal and systematic contributions to the great enterprises in operation for the evangelization of the world.

The consistent Christian has also an ardent love for the household of Christian faith to which he belongs—not a blind, bigoted attachment to his sect, which excludes love for other Christians, but a peculiar love for that branch of the Church with which he is in living union kindred to his peculiar affection for his own family—a love which strengthens and intensifies his regard for the entire Church of Christ. But the Christian can contribute to the prosperity of his particular Church only to the extent that he is active in the cause of beneficence. There can be no substitute for this.

If a selfish Church is visited by a revival, much of the good which might result is al-



ways lost. By her penuriousness she deprives herself of those influences which are essential thoroughly to enlist the new converts in the Christian cause, and to call them into early and efficient action in the accomplishment of the glorious purposes contemplated by the divine Founder of the Church. In consequence of this deficiency, many of those who are converted are likely to backslide, and many of the remainder to be of little use to the Church and the world for want of something to do. A Church is to the fullest extent a light to those by whom she is immediately surrounded only when she shines with such brilliancy as to send her rays into all the earth.

Another of the natural forms of that love which reigns in the Christian's heart is patriotism. He loves his country. But the infinite Sovereign who "doeth his will among the inhabitants of the earth," as well as "in the armies of heaven," has said, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and "them that honor me I will honor." The Christian, then, can promote the interests of his country in no other way than by influencing the people to elect God as their supreme Ruler. But to accomplish this requires all the enterprise of the Church in a grand organization for sys-

tematic Christian beneficence. Men after God's own heart, anointed by himself for the work, must be sustained by the Church, and sent into every neglected part of the nation to advocate his reign ; the book of God must be furnished to every family which is destitute of it ; Sunday schools must be established in every desolate neighborhood ; and tracts must be scattered everywhere like the leaves of autumn.

It is idle to talk of freedom and education as a guaranty of national permanency and prosperity. He only is free indeed who is made free by the Son of God. All others are in the bondage of sin :—

“He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside.”

Education is a necessity ; but sound education is the legitimate fruit of godliness. Our schools shine with a radiance borrowed from Christianity as really as the moon reflects the light of the sun. Christianity is the sun from which emanates all the light which discovers to a nation the path of progress. A vital religion is ever the pioneer of education and freedom, and is the one great engine of progress.

Nor should we overlook the relation which

as a people we sustain to the other nations of the earth. Such are the immutable laws of God that selfishness is always ruinous to self-interest. The welfare of the individual, of the family, of the Church, of the nation, each requires a beneficence which is world-wide. The prosperity of a nation depends in no small degree upon the condition of other nations. God will honor us as a people in proportion as we seek to honor him by exerting our influence to unite our nation to the other nations of the earth in a great brotherhood. From other nations we derive a great amount of the motive power which stirs the mind and heart of our own nation. Their literature either enriches or disgraces our libraries, and poisons and corrupts, or nourishes and elevates the minds of our people. In all our intercourse with them we receive an influence which is either ennobling or degrading. Even for our temporal wealth we are in a great degree dependent upon our commerce with them.

In sending the Gospel to other nations, then, we are, at the same time, purifying those fountains of influence which are constantly pouring in their streams of good or evil upon our own land. Our offerings for the spiritual good of other nations are large-

ly rewarded to our own nation even in a pecuniary sense. We appropriate a sum probably not exceeding that expended upon some of our railroads to evangelize the Sandwich Islands. The rays of the Gospel dispel the gloom of heathenism, and civilization and enterprise follow as naturally as the earth produces its fruits under the influence of refreshing rain and a summer's sun. As one result to our nation, we have, in a few years, a prosperous commerce with these islands, by which we are receiving a tenfold return for all the treasure we have expended. We plant a colony in Africa in behalf of a down-trodden race; and in a quarter of a century our commerce with it has opened a new field of national enterprise, and become a new source of national wealth. Thus patriotism is a powerful motive for the spread of Christianity throughout the earth.

But the Christian's love is not bounded by national limits. His affections encircle the entire race. He is a philanthropist at heart, and not merely as a matter of expediency. "The heart of the Christian is a shoreless ocean of love." He regards all men as his brethren, and he sighs in view of the ignorance, and depravity, and wretchedness of the hundreds of millions who sit in darkness and

the shadow of death. But the only way permanently to improve their condition in any respect is to extend to them the blessings of Christianity—"to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is sin which has blighted this once fair world, and changed it to a moral wilderness: "the grace of God which bringeth salvation," alone is efficacious to restore it to its primitive beauty.

To every true Christian, this dependence of man's earthly well-being upon religion is a very fruitful source of genuine zeal in the cause of beneficence. The father would die for his son, the patriot for his country; and the philanthropist, regardless of danger and toil, devotes his property and his life in searching the haunts of misery and relieving the wants of the suffering. But philanthropy, and patriotism, and paternal love, and every virtuous affection, combine to awaken the Christian to the most vigorous exertion for the salvation of his fellow-men from sin. Christianity reaches at once the real cause of all evil. It furnishes the only remedy for the desolate condition of our world; and, in its progressive career, it is destined finally to change all the blighted forests of humanity into a paradise of redeemed and consecrated intelligences.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE REQUIRED BENEFICENCE A DIVINE INSTRUMENTALITY IN THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF OUR FELLOW-MEN.

IN the preceding chapter we have considered the results of Christian Beneficence in the present life. Let us now direct our attention to its results in the life to come. The spiritual riches which its efforts are instrumental in bestowing upon the world, to all who are faithful to their trust, are immortal. Here the tree is planted and nurtured, and will extend its branches, richly laden with the fruit of happiness and holiness, until they will overshadow the earth. Then, transplanted to the soil of paradise, it will bear the same celestial fruit forever.

That which God receives into his treasury is a sure investment, for it can never be wrested from him. It is under the special care of omnipotent Wisdom and Love. Of its success there can be no more doubt than that souls shall be saved through the sufferings and death of Christ; for, by divine ap-

pointment, the sacrifices of Christian beneficence are associated with the great sacrifice of atonement, and that the latter shall not fail we have the sure word of God. "When he shall make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." In accordance with this, when the object is to inspire Christians with zeal in the work of the Lord they are uniformly addressed in terms of encouragement. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

These promises have been signally verified in every age of the Church, and always in proportion to the spirit of self-sacrifice by which she has been characterized. Already

millions, converted through her instrumentality, have triumphed in the hour of death in the assurance of a glorious immortality; and who can doubt that other millions of her converts, many of whom, but a few years ago, were in the darkness of paganism, are now in the way to heaven?

But Christian beneficence is not only certain to be followed by eternal results: its results are also destined to an eternal expansion. Even when it is not immediately successful, it becomes evermore a divine instrumentality—a part of the aggregate means by which the work of saving souls is carried forward, and the world will finally be restored to the dominion of the Prince of Peace. Every Christian, however unpromising the human view, may contribute his efforts to the work of sowing the good seed of religious truth, in full assurance that the day of eternity will reveal a glorious harvest. In the realms of bliss he may meet multitudes unknown to him upon earth, to whose salvation his efforts shall have instrumentally contributed.

Doubtless the influence of the poor widow in giving her two mites already bears a relation to the salvation of many thousands who have entered the paradise of God, amid



the felicities of which the free powers of the soul will unfold forever. And who shall say, that, on the great day when the history of the world shall pass in review, hundreds of similar sacrifices shall not be found connected with results equally glorious? They may have been unobserved by the eye of the world, and yet have had the greatest prominence in the counsels of heaven. A poor woman in needy circumstances resolved to spin an extra hank of yarn a week, that she might be able to subscribe a penny a week to the missionary cause. Now may it not be reasonably concluded, that, under the superintending care of the infinite Benefactor, each hard-earned penny of this poor woman will ultimately exert an influence equal to the rescue of one precious soul from the darkness of heathenism and the bondage of sin to the light and liberty of a child of God? A blind man, very poor in the things of this world, but rich in faith, gave twenty-five cents, which was all his living, toward the erection of churches in the West. Now a few thousand similar contributions are sufficient to build a church, in which the faithful preaching of the Gospel may be instrumental in the conversion of hundreds, and even thousands of souls. But this is not

half the good which will result. Under the same preaching, Christians will be nourished with the truth and built up in the faith of the Gospel ; and a restraining and elevating moral and religious influence will be exerted upon the entire surrounding population for thirty or forty years. Nor does the good stop here. This is only the beginning. This little church will be a perpetual honor and blessing to the nation and to the world. The stream of hallowed influence here formed by the combination of thousands of little rills, will in time spread its waters over the earth, and, flowing adown succeeding ages, will swell the eternal ocean of felicity. Now, to all these sublimely glorious results, the self-sacrificing contribution of this poor blind man will forever bear an instrumental relation. Equally great and glorious will be the influence of the reader and the writer, if they are equally faithful almoners of that which God has intrusted to them.

Again : the sacrifices of Christian beneficence will constitute an eternal bond of union to the saved. Heaven is not portioned off for the accommodation of penurious spirits. It is a holy compact of such as upon earth, in imitation of the Son of God, “pleased not themselves, but every one his

neighbor for his good to edification ;” who “sought not their own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved ;” and who, for this purpose, were willing to become poor in the things of this world, and even “to lay down their lives.” They are all united by cords of love, formed by self-sacrificing effort for each other’s well-being while they were probationers, and by a common likeness to and union with the great Benefactor. Every sincere endeavor to do good here, will constitute a peculiar tie of relationship there. Thus each one will be bound by an ardent gratitude to all whose efforts shall be found connected with his salvation, and, in turn, will receive the most affectionate greetings from all to whom his own faithfulness shall have been the means of good. This twofold bond, uniting the past and the future, will link, in indissoluble union, the good of all ages. True, each one cannot be instrumental in the salvation of all ; but he may in the case of multitudes ; and the salvation of every soul will be a never-failing source of joy to all the redeemed. Besides, true Christian beneficence is never limited in its aims to the salvation of one soul, nor of one neighborhood, nor of one generation. It embraces the

world with all its unborn generations, and is satisfied with nothing less than the largest possible results. This universal love cherished by the Christian—this aim to do all which is possible to save all whom his influence can reach—is one of the essential characteristics of a true son of Heaven, and one of the cords which will bind its inhabitants in an eternal brotherhood.

Once more : The salvation of souls is a motive of great strength to the Christian, because of its affinity with his peculiar desires and aspirations. It is the very nature of the Christian to abhor sin, to pity the degraded and unfortunate, to love all men as brethren, and to desire that all may enjoy true happiness, now and forever. If time were the limit of his own existence, his benevolence might relate only to the interests of time; but bearing as he does the image of the Eternal, by a law of his being, his heart yearns for the eternal life of his fellow-men. But how mournful the facts which a glance at the state of the world presents to him ! Hundreds of millions who bear the same relation to God and eternity that he does, in whose veins flows blood kindred to his own, who, like himself, are endowed with capacities for ever-increasing happiness and holiness, who might be

heirs with Christ to an everlasting inheritance in heaven, he beholds "dead in trespasses and sins,"—"without hope and without God in the world," almost as careless and ignorant of immortality as the beasts that perish. Now, in view of the certainty that, by diligence and self-sacrifice, he may contribute a certain measure of influence to the accomplishment of a work so dear to his heart as that of rescuing these his brethren from their lost condition, and restoring them to an eternal life of holiness, surely we need not pause to exhort him to effort. He who hesitates with such a motive before him, may well suspect the genuineness of his faith. His want is not more exhortation nor more instruction, but a new baptism of the fire of divine love. Let him seek this, and it will kindle in his heart a flame of love for the souls of men. Then, the words of inspiration will be sufficient to thrill him with a zeal which will be irrepressible. "Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE REQUIRED BENEFICENCE A JUST RETURN  
FOR THE GOOD WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED AS  
OBJECTS OF THE BENEFICENCE OF OTHERS.

THOUGH all the blessings with which we are favored come from the hand of the divine Benefactor, yet with their bestowment the beneficent efforts of our fellow-men are often associated, and thence arises a direct obligation of gratitude to them. This obligation, it is true, is small in comparison ; but it is as real as though no other existed, and is great in itself—so great as to constitute a just claim to our utmost endeavors. Indeed, to give all and do all we can, is but a small return for the advantages which we all enjoy through the unselfish offerings of Christian beneficence.

If we are ourselves blessed with abundance, yet it is morally certain that some of our ancestors, and probably not many generations back, needed and received the helping hand of charity, and that as the result we are better off to-day. We have thus inherited the debt as a sacred and perpetual obligation. Equally clear, if not equally forcible, is our

obligation to beneficence in view of assistance generously rendered to our neighborhood, or town, or country, in some season of extremity. Though the famine, or pestilence, or war, may not have reached our own dwellings, yet, as neighbors, as patriots, and especially as Christians, we felt ourselves, as in fact we were, involved in the public calamity, and indebted to those who volunteered relief. How often, in the early history of our country, did the colonies, now grown to thriving states, march to each other's aid in their conflicts with the savage tribes by which they were surrounded. At a later period the cry of suffering in one city, produced by an extensive conflagration or by some wasting contagion, has been answered by liberal contributions from another city. Our pilgrim ancestors, in the day of their extremity, were relieved by benevolent persons in England. Within a few years the suffering of the poor in England and Ireland has afforded us an opportunity to respond to the obligation. France aided us in fighting our country's battles and gaining our freedom. Now, the door is open for us to bestow upon France the saving truth of the Gospel, which alone can secure to her the freedom for which she has so long vainly struggled. Though the

blessing which it is ours to bestow is much greater than that which we received, yet it will cost us much less pecuniary sacrifice. Besides, who shall say that, even for this most valuable of our possessions, we are not, in part, indebted to the aid received from France at a period when the question was vassalage or independence. To aid us in deciding that question she sent to us thousands of her sons and millions of her treasure. Is it anything more than just that we should return a few thousands from our treasures, to aid in rescuing her sons from the more deplorable bondage of Popery and Atheism, and restoring to them true freedom?

But vastly more extensive is our indebtedness to the beneficence of others for spiritual blessings. The reader may never have known what it was to be poor in the things of this world; but very likely he was once so entirely destitute of the true riches as to depend solely upon the beneficence of others for the word of life. This is doubtless true of more than one reader of these pages, who is now rejoicing in the witness of adoption. Though affluent in the goods of earth, he paid nothing toward the erection of churches, the support of preaching, supplying libraries for Sunday schools, and the distribution of



Bibles and religious tracts. But through some of these agencies, or through all of them combined, he has been restored from death in sin to a life of godliness—from total blindness to his true interests to a clear perception of them, and of the true method of securing them; from the bondage of Satan to the freedom of a child of God; from the poverty of one utterly destitute of enduring riches to the present possession of a treasure he would not exchange for worlds of solid gold, and to heirship with Christ to an inheritance “incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away” in heaven.

How many thousands now in the ranks of the militant Church were led to seek the great salvation by means of tracts gratuitously distributed. How many thousands more were gathered into the Redeemer’s fold by the gratuitous religious instruction of Sunday schools. Again, how many thousands were converted through the agency of Churches which were originally planted by means of missionary contributions, or by the nearly or quite unpaid services of the ministers of Christ. A large proportion of the present members of our branch of the Church—probably a third of all—were brought to a saving knowledge of the truth by means of

religious agencies, for the support of which neither they nor their parents had previously contributed anything. If you, dear reader, are one of this number, how great is your debt! But if this is not your case, is it not the case of a beloved companion, or of some other dear friend of yours? A preacher of the Gospel, widely known by his able and eloquent appeals in behalf of the missionary enterprise, feelingly stated, as one of the motives which prompted his efforts, that a niece of his whom he tenderly loved was converted through the instrumentality of a Christian Missionary in South America, where she was residing the wife of a United States consul. He justly regarded this as constituting him a debtor to the missionary cause. A proof this that neither wealth, nor talent, nor station exempts us from dependence upon the beneficence even of the poor; for this faithful missionary was probably a poor man, and depended largely for his support upon those who were in humble circumstances.

We have only to take a broader view, to discover that we are all indebted for the blessings of the Gospel to the sacrifices of others. Its first preachers became fools in the estimation of their countrymen, endured poverty and violent persecution, and most

of them even laid down their lives; and all this in the cause of Christ for the salvation of the world. How many since have suffered martyrdom in the same cause. Now the sacrifices of all these noble men are connected with our own salvation. They proclaimed and defended the truth, even unto death, against those who sought its extinction; and they have bequeathed it to us, with the legacy of their bright example, to rebuke our unfaithfulness, and to inspire us to fidelity and zeal. Their names form a bright galaxy ever shedding upon us a hallowed radiance.

The Gospel has come to us through some of the very nations which are now dependent upon us to return it. Western Asia, now so benighted, was once its radiating center. To Greece we are indebted for some of the ablest defenders and brightest examples of the Christian faith. From Rome, in which now reigns the double night of Popery and infidelity, Christianity once shone with a brightness which illuminated Europe, and kindled a fadeless light in England, from which its pure beams were reflected upon our own land. Those nations in which the light of truth has gone out are doubtless culpable; but with their faults we have

nothing to do. If they have been unfaithful to God, to him they are responsible. This does not cancel our obligations to them, and to the world through them, for the good which they have bestowed upon us. By greater faithfulness to God, they might have placed us under still higher obligations to them. But the good which we have actually received from them is such as cannot be estimated in silver and gold.

We need not extend this enumeration of facts; for a glance at the subject shows beyond a doubt, that, both for temporal and spiritual things, we are largely indebted to the unrequited beneficence of our fellow-men. To be dispossessed of all the good which we have thus received, would be our utter ruin. How great, then, are our obligations to our race. From a sense of justice to the world, as well as from the command of God and the promptings of love, we ought all to be practically benevolent.

To repay the debt is impossible. That our present blessings and our hopes of eternal good have, in a great degree, come to us instrumentally through the sacrifices of others, is a fact; and our obligation will run parallel with our endless being. But to pay the interest we have abundant opportunities.

It is not always possible to make a direct return to those of whose benevolence we are reaping the fruits; but, as we have seen, it is often our privilege to confer blessings upon their posterity, or their countrymen. But the truly benevolent, though the best of fathers and sons and brothers, and the most devoted of patriots, belong not exclusively to one family, or one nation, or one age, but to the great family of man in all ages. They love all men as themselves; and our obligation to them is equally acknowledged by relief afforded to the needy or suffering of whatever land or age. Like the great Benefactor whose image they bear, they regard good bestowed upon the humblest of their brethren of the human family as bestowed upon themselves.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE REQUIRED BENEFICENCE FAVORABLE TO  
PROSPERITY IN ACQUIRING TEMPORAL POS-  
SESSIONS.

DUTY toward God, and benevolence toward the world, ever go hand in hand with self-interest. If we mistake not, the practical weight of this truth is much greater than is generally supposed. When it shall be once thoroughly impressed upon the mind of the Church, a great advantage will be gained for the Christian cause. It will not make her perfect. It will not directly increase her piety. Strictly speaking, religion is the only motive which imparts to her new strength. But when she shall have deeply learned that giving all and doing all which God requires of her for the salvation of the world is promotive of every interest of time as well as of eternity, one of the now weakest points in her citadel will be fortified ; and this will be the achievement of a great victory. Some of the channels which now drain her resources will be closed up. She

will learn her real strength ; and, instead of wasting it in parleying with the enemy, she will concentrate it in extending the conquests of redemption.

While, then, we should ever remember that religious obligation is the great motive upon which the cause of Christian beneficence is dependent for strength and stability, it by no means follows that the motive of self-interest should be disregarded. God himself addresses it upon almost every page, both in his written word, and in the volume of his providence. It is a moving power in the mind of man, and it has a province of its own in which it rules. And this province is really enlarged when the kingdom of God is set up in the heart. He who is thoroughly a Christian, has escaped from that bondage to Satan which chains him to the present and to the groveling objects of sense. He is alive to the interests of eternity as well as to those of time. He will not barter heaven for earth. Besides, he sees the real value of his interests, and his estimate of them is immeasurably augmented. They all become eternal. And, what is directly to the purpose, he feels the force of the truth that he is not his own, and sees that the interests of self are inseparably connected

with the glory of God and the interests of his fellow-men.

Thus self-interest suggests and intensifies all the other motives to beneficence. A regard for it becomes a duty, and is blended with every aspiration of holy love. In this chapter we appeal to that interest which man naturally and properly feels in those inferior possessions which are peculiar to the present life. Our position here is, that Scriptural beneficence is favorable even to this lowest form of prosperity.

In respect to this there is no ground for rational doubt to the believer in Christianity; for revelation is very explicit. It is, however, a subject upon which there is much liability to err. That it may be examined intelligently, we will, in the outset, quote entire several passages relating to it, that they may mutually explain each other. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and



thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” “The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.” “Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of Hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed.” “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.” “He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man

according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth the cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Such is a specimen of the unequivocal declarations with which the Bible abounds on this subject. They most emphatically assume that God exercises a particular providence in behalf of those who are faithful to their stewardship. For them he "opens the windows of heaven," and "rebukes the devourer;" while to the unfaithful he says, "Ye are cursed with a curse."

God is abundantly able to fulfill his promises. All the treasures of earth and heaven are under his absolute control. The inexhaustible reservoirs of wealth and honor and influence are his, and he can cause his streams to flow out from them in what direction soever he will. His resources are infinite, and he employs them all in accomplishing his declared purpose, specially to promote the temporal as well as the spiritual interests of those who are true to their trust. All the uniform laws by which God governs the world are framed with a special refer-

ence to this immutable principle in his economy.

The reasonableness of this is obvious at a glance. It is just what we should naturally expect, that God should increase the trust to those who are good stewards, and should say to him who wastes his goods, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." So every wise man would do by those whom he should appoint as stewards over portions of his property. The temporal as well as the spiritual interests of those who give liberally to support the poor and religion are identified with the interests of Christ. Hence, in prospering them, God is advancing his own cause in the earth; for they are acting the very part which he designed in his own system of beneficence.

This class of divine promises obviously appeals to man's natural desire to be a possessor. But we are not to infer that a liberal beneficence will, in all cases, immediately secure its full gratification. Probably some sincere Christians are not yet strong enough to render worldly prosperity safe, their natural tendency to love the world being so strong that its possessions, if largely intrusted to them, would be sure to engage their affections and occasion their ruin. In the

case of such persons, it is not at all mysterious that the divine Benefactor should only moderately supply them with that gold which is perishable, and would peril their all; and should reward them, if faithful stewards over their limited trust, with those riches which will never perish—"in the pure coin of heaven."

Let not the poor Christian, however, in any case, infer that his destitution is the result of his conformity to the Gospel standard of liberality. Had he apostatized—given up his religion—we do not say but God might have made him an example, by abandoning him a victim to worldly prosperity. That would have been no gain to him. It would have made him the possessed instead of the possessor—the slave instead of the master. But so long as he sincerely aims to lead a Christian life, he may rely upon the word of God, that, if he is permitted to suffer want, it is not because he is liberal; for it is an immutable divine law that liberality tends to prosperity. Had he neglected to give as God requires, it is altogether probable, if not certain, that he would either have been still poorer, or God would have "let him alone" in his robbery till the great day of final reckoning.

If we understand these promises, moreover, it is not wealth, but *thrift*, which they offer to the liberal—not hoarded riches, but riches flowing out into the various channels of benevolence as constantly and freely as they are received. They appeal not to a depraved love of money, which blights every generous susceptibility of the soul, and degrades man to the condition of a slave; but to a spirit of manly enterprise, to that sanctified desire of possession which is consistent with the highest moral freedom and the purest and largest benevolence—not to the passion of cupidity, but to a holy ambition to gain all we can lawfully gain as a means of doing good. They are addressed not to the miser, whose all-absorbing desire is for gain, but to him who, while he experiences a real and proper gratification in receiving, feels it to be yet more blessed to give. We may and ought suitably to provide for our own households; and, within the limits of Christian economy, to do this liberally, if we can, and yet give liberally. Those who are called to serve God in such enterprises as demand capital, may, with the same proviso, acquire so much as is needed. But whatever a man accumulates beyond this, will assuredly be a curse to himself and to his

family. It is nothing less than robbing God. We are absolutely forbidden to lay up treasures upon earth.

It scarcely need be said that no one has any claim to these promises except he comply with all their conditions. To be entitled to them he must act from a sense of religious obligation, and in the spirit of benevolence; and he must give liberally and systematically. They belong to "the righteous," who, in doing good, "trusts in the Lord," and gives that in so doing he may "honor the Lord with his substance"—to "the merciful," who "gives not grudgingly or of necessity," but as a "cheerful giver"—to "the liberal soul" that "deviseth liberal things"—to him who "honors the Lord with the first-fruits of all his increase," giving not a twentieth or a fiftieth at his convenience, but promptly and regularly bringing the full proportion required, "all the tithes into the storehouse" of the Lord.

It is now obvious that the beneficence encouraged in the divine promises is the very means which the Christian needs for increasing his qualifications for the responsibilities of a steward. It affords him an opportunity to acquire strength of principle, and thus it counteracts any tendency he may have to

set his heart upon the world, and thereby renders it safe to his own soul as well as to the interests of Christ's cause to intrust him with its possessions.

It is also plain that this style of giving is, in all respects, favorable to prosperity in business. It requires system, one of the great essentials to success. It tends to the cultivation of habits of industry and frugality. "A good man showeth favor and lendeth. He will guide his affairs with discretion." It secures the healthful and vigorous action of all those powers of mind by which he is enabled to acquire property, and thus qualifies him to manage business with greater skill and on a more extended scale. Again, it insures the confidence of his fellow-men. To a great extent it disarms the malicious. Few are so hardened as not to respect the rights of those whom they know make a wise and benevolent use of their possessions. Such a reputation is not unfrequently a better security against the midnight thief than are bars and bolts. But still greater is the advantage which this reputation gives a man in his business relations. Many men who pride themselves in making good bargains at the expense of the penurious and the covetous, would scorn to do this in their deal-

ings with those who live to do good. Their presence restores in them a sense of honor and justice. Thus Christianity, beginning with the poor, elevates them to competence by the very sacrifices which it requires from their limited store. One has only to consult his common-sense to insure the conviction, that, if all the poor conscientiously gave the first tenth of their income to the Lord, not one in twenty of those who now throng our almshouses would ever be reduced to this disagreeable necessity. We should despair of reasoning with a man to whom this is not obvious.

It should be further noticed that these promises reach to the posterity of the beneficent. They are made to man not as a selfish, but as a social being. They address his interest in his children and in his children's children. This fact is sometimes stated, and in all cases is doubtless implied. Of "the righteous" who "is ever merciful and lendeth," the Psalmist says, "I have not seen his seed begging bread." "His seed is blessed." So also the promise made to Abraham, and repeated to Jacob, included his seed after him. It had its highest fulfillment several centuries after his decease. If we could trace the history of families, doubtless we should find multitudes



of similar illustrations. The laws upon which the reflex influence of beneficence is based begin to operate at once, but they have not time to produce the grandest results in a single generation. But succeeding generations, unless by gross selfishness they forfeit the title, will infallibly reap the golden fruit. Every offering which a man makes to the treasury of God, by a divine decree, becomes a perpetual and profitable investment for the benefit of his family, of the Church of his choice, of his town, of his country, of the world. The motive here is in direct contrast with avarice. Avarice, like every other depraved passion, demands immediate indulgence. It blinds its victim to the welfare of his children, destroys his power to love, and shuts him up forever in the gloomy prison of self. But the motive presented to the mind in the divine promises takes a man out of self, discovers to him an inspiring future, kindles in his heart an affection for the generations that will follow him, and thus secures the free, joyous action of all his powers.

“True *self-love* and *social* are the same.”

Finally, it should be observed that the promise of temporal good to the beneficent

is intimately related to, and blended with, the promise of spiritual good. If, then, in some cases temporal prosperity is not enjoyed by those who give to the extent of their means, yet the promise is fulfilled in the spirit of it, in that they become sure heirs to the exhaustless treasures of heaven. The things of earth are not to be regarded as an ultimate reward to the faithful. We have no permanent interest in them, for they are all perishable ; and besides, this is not our permanent abode. A limited amount of earthly things may contribute to our comfort for a season, and enable us to do good. But if extreme poverty be occasionally the lot of one whose all is consecrated to God, yet he can rest calmly upon the broader promises, that "it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not;" and that "all things work together for his good," in facilitating his progress in laying up eternal treasure.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE REQUIRED BENEFICENCE INDISPENSABLE TO  
A PREPARATION FOR THE LIFE TO COME.

No truth appears more prominently on the pages of revelation than that the present life is probationary—that we are here determining whether happiness or misery shall be our portion in eternity. To enable us to determine this question wisely, the divine Benefactor has furnished us every possible facility. This, indeed, as we have seen in the second chapter of this essay, is the grand purpose contemplated in the entire economy of his providence. Thus he has made us his stewards, that we may prove ourselves faithful to him by applying that which he commits to us according to his requirements—placed us over a few things that he may prepare us to be rulers over many things; and he has made us possessors, that, by giving of our own to promote the welfare of others, we may acquire that principle of godlike benevolence which is essential to preparation for heaven. But the very opportunity which is afforded us of proving ourselves faithful, implies equal

power to be faithless. The sacred trust which was intended as a means of good, we, as moral agents, may pervert into an instrument of evil. We may treacherously withhold our Lord's goods from his service, and thereby incur his everlasting condemnation. We may selfishly turn a deaf ear to the wants and woes of our perishing brethren, and, in so doing, perish ourselves forever. Them that honor God with their substance, and them only, he will honor with everlasting life.

In accordance with this great principle in his government, the Creator has so framed the human constitution that all its laws are adapted to beneficence and opposed to selfishness. Man was made to love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself, and to glorify God in doing good to all men, as he has opportunity. This is as much his natural sphere of action as atmospheric air is the natural element for the expansion of his lungs. To see him selfishly engrossed in the world—suffering the affections of his undying soul to be placed on its corroding treasures—is as unnatural a sight as it would be to see the king of the forest imitating a crawling worm, or the royal eagle wallowing in the filth of the swine. He, then, who

lives to himself alone, not only conflicts with the will of God, but he acts in opposition to the laws of his own being. He degrades himself, and works his own ruin. The calls of his depraved appetite may be gratified, but the gratification is necessarily nauseous to his taste; and, by repeating the indulgence, such appetite constantly gains strength until it makes him its slave. On the other hand, the beneficent man is true to nature as well as to God and the world. All within is felt to be harmonious, and his labors of love never fail to secure a present reward in the delightful emotions which they excite. And the longer he continues in the practice of them the more intense is their pleasure, until they acquire the constancy of a permanent habit. Thus the beneficent man inwardly experiences the truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Here we notice two facts.

First, beneficence secures the pleasure of the approval of conscience, while its neglect incurs the lashings of its rebukes. We refer not now to the fact that beneficence is right and selfishness is wrong, but to the joyful sense of right which the Framer of the human mind has associated with the approval of conscience, and to the sting of remorse

which he has connected with its rebukes. Even though our sacrifices may cost us a struggle against a selfish propensity not yet wholly overcome, still there is a sense of true elevation of character—of genuine independence of soul—in the victory achieved over self, and a glorious satisfaction in the consciousness of faithfulness to our stewardship, and that we are living to purpose.

The other fact alluded to is, that beneficence is the legitimate means of cultivating a benevolent disposition, which is to its possessor a perpetual fountain of the purest happiness, and is a sure antidote to selfishness, which would convert the heart into a pool of corruption and bitterness. To be happy, then, man must be benevolent, and to be benevolent he must be beneficent. There is no other means by which he can treasure up heaven within him.

But it is not happiness which is placed before us as the standard of attainment. Happiness is the gift of God as the reward of the attainment of virtuous character. God would bestow upon us that exalted happiness which is kindred to his own; and to this end it is essential that we acquire character kindred to his. In order that we may do this, we must cultivate a spirit of

obedience to God, and of benevolence toward our fellow-beings, under circumstances which will cost us self-denial. This is the only way in which our wills can become conformed to the will of God, and benevolence can become a moral principle—in a word, this is the only way in which we can become godlike. Let no one imagine that the provisions of grace will save him the trouble of thus denying himself. Grace will do its own work; but we must do ours.

Since we have sinned, and are by nature in a state of spiritual death, our restoration is, of course, indispensable. We must be born of the Spirit—washed in the blood of Christ. But this does not do our work as probationers. Conversion, though an absolute requisite to our salvation, is entirely distinct from the great object for which we were placed upon earth. We need to be pardoned because we have sinned—to be lifted up because we have fallen—to be washed because we have become defiled. This, however, is a work which God does for us; and it does not supersede the universal command, “Work out your own salvation.” Renewal in the image of God just brings us into a condition to do this work advantageously. To pause here, is infallibly to fall

again into a state more deplorable than that from which grace has saved us. Grace renews us in the divine image; but godlike action is the process by which the divine image is rendered indelible in our natures. This, indeed, as we have before observed, is the very purpose for which God has assigned to us a part in his own great scheme of beneficence. He has connected our efforts with the salvation of the world, that we may have an exalted sphere of moral action. He has given us much, and requires of us much, that we may acquire much. He has placed us under great responsibilities, that we may make great attainments. The present enjoyment which we realize in doing good—the luxury which attends it—is designed to cheer and encourage us in the performance of that work by which God would prepare us for the holy delight of heaven. Holiness is the standard of character which he has placed before us—holiness not as a state merely, but as a principle formed by moral action, and having the fixedness of habit. It is the work of “grace through faith” alone to make the heart pure—to overcome selfishness and drive it from the heart; but beneficent effort must be added, to keep out this dire enemy by closing up



every avenue against it. Moreover, it is plain that the beneficence which is essential to our work of preparation for heaven, is precisely that which the divine Benefactor has prescribed. It must be characterized by religious principle, and by liberality and system according to the Bible standard.

We are by no means to infer that our preparation for heaven required that sin and misery should surround us during our probation. It is enough for us to know, that, such being the case, our infinitely wise and beneficent Creator has made it the occasion by which we may cultivate the benevolent affections, and acquire the principle of obedience to him by supplying the wants and relieving the woes of our fellow-men, and publishing to them all the glad tidings of a sovereign remedy.

These views will be found to accord perfectly with the representations of Scripture, as a few quotations will show. In its exhortations to alms-giving, and to Christian effort generally, the spiritual improvement of those who are addressed is constantly urged. They are taught that their own salvation is dependent upon their compliance; while, as others have truthfully observed, very little is said to excite their natural sympathies.

“Sell that ye have and give alms: *provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.*” “Let us not be weary in well-doing: *for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*” “Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*”

One more quotation from the sacred volume in which we are pointed to the solemn scrutiny of the great day, and we leave the reader to elect for himself between Christ and the world—between an immortal crown and the dreadful doom of an unfaithful servant, alone in presence of the Judge Supreme.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations:

and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me

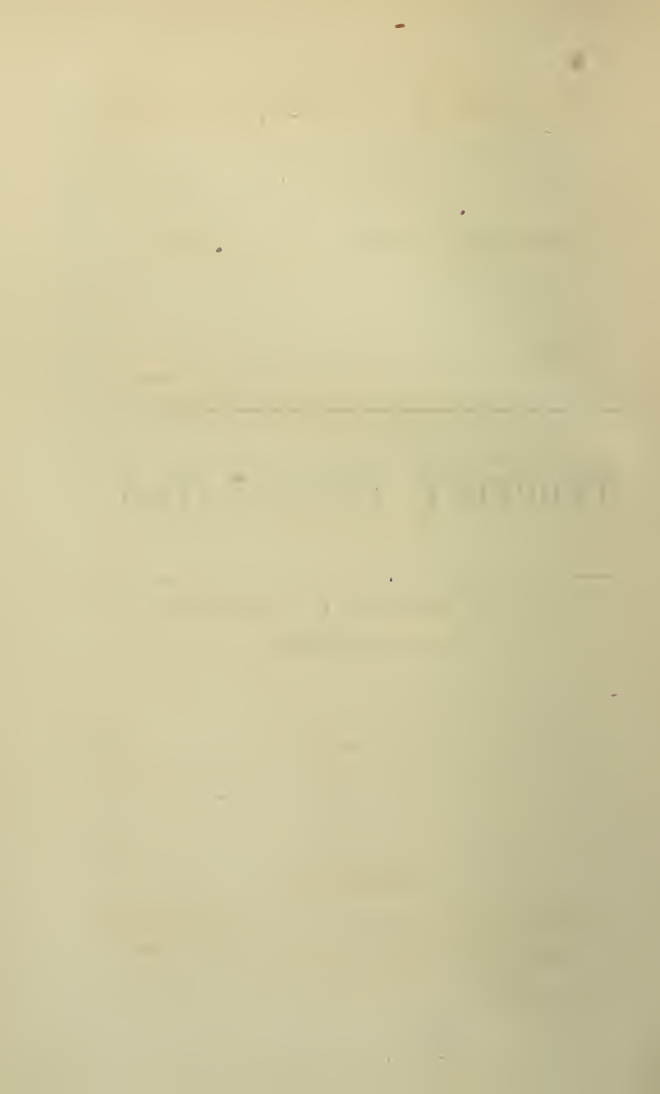
not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick; or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

THE END.

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PROPERTY CONSECRATED.

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# PROPERTY CONSECRATED ;

OR,

HONORING GOD WITH OUR SUBSTANCE.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE WILL OF GOD IN RELATION TO  
PROPERTY, AND AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEM-  
PORAL AND SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES ARISING  
FROM ITS RIGHT USE.

*A Prize Essay.*

BY REV. BENJAMIN ST. JAMES FRY,  
OF THE OHIO CONFERENCE.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THE following Treatise is one of the three Prize Essays on Systematic Beneficence sent out under the auspices of the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. We feel great pleasure in submitting it to the Christian public. It is full of strong thoughts, clearly and forcibly expressed. Its appropriate title appeals to the soundest convictions and purest desires of the true Christian.

“Property consecrated.” What reflecting man does not realize that he has received his earthly possessions from God? He cannot supply one particle of the material, or of the mental and muscular energy, or of the mechanical skill or power upon which the production of wealth depends.

These are all gifts from his heavenly Father. And what honor is conferred upon him in being constituted an agent in the practical exercises of divine benevolence ! The goods are entrusted to him that he may share with God the holy delights of charity, and the invaluable blessings of Christian enterprise. He is made a beneficiary that he may be a benefactor. How, then, is he to hold the treasures committed to his care ? As exclusively his own ? As devoted to selfish ends ? No. With pious gratitude it should all be consecrated to the service of God, so that everything demanded by the exigencies of the Church and the wants of humanity should be deemed sacred to the purposes of Christian beneficence. Who can describe the results of "Property consecrated"—the property of the whole Church, of each individual of the Church, so set apart to the service of God as that no unjust proportion of it shall be used upon self, none whatever squandered in worldly extravagance, and all that is requisite for the purposes of benevolence shall be ready at a moment's notice ?

“Honoring God.” To this the good man is solemnly devoted. He often regrets that he does not better succeed in accomplishing it. He asks with deep concern, “How shall I honor God?” Especially, “How shall I honor him with my earthly possessions?” These are too often a snare to him. He finds himself unduly attached to them. His conscience not unfrequently rebukes him for the reluctance he feels in parting with them, even for the noblest purposes of Christian benevolence. He mourns over this weakness, if not evidence of remaining depravity. He would desire, we assume, to be relieved from these embarrassments—to learn how he can make all his worldly employments subserve his spiritual interests—how he can become happy in giving all due support to the claims of God—how he may, so far as his responsibility extends, remove all temporal embarrassments from the Church, and secure the greatest possible efficiency for all her enterprises. Let him read this little book. It will conduct him to God’s own method of solving all

these problems, and at the same time secure the richest returns of true satisfaction, business prosperity, and spiritual enlargement.

To many this essay will be a welcome messenger. It will confirm them in principles already adopted, and strengthen their noble purposes for the future. It will reach multitudes of others who have been by no means deficient in liberality, but whose methods of giving have been without system. To such, we trust, it will be a word in season, which will bring order out of chaos. Under its genial teachings and persuasions their Christian benevolence will assume a regularity and consistency most efficient and reliable for the demands of humanity and religion.

JESSE T. PECK.

NEW-YORK, *Dec.* 20, 1855.

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# SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

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## PROPERTY CONSECRATED.

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### CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—THE IMPORTANCE OF A CAREFUL INVESTIGATION OF THE DIVINE WILL IN RELATION TO BENEFICENCE.

THOSE who have an intelligent conception of Christianity, or, what is far better, an experimental knowledge of it, are aware that it is a *new life*, consisting in love to God and man. While God claims our devotion as his own peculiar right, he also commands the largest benevolence toward our fellow-men—a benevolence reaching into all the manifold activities of life. To inspire us to live such a life he has himself given us an example of it on the grandest scale. We see in the plan of salvation revealed in the Bible, the munificence of a God. The Father withholds not his only-begotten Son, but delivers him up freely for us all.

Jesus, who was rich, becomes poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. He went about on the earth a way-faring man, acquainted with grief, engaged in doing good; and, as the last and greatest token of his love, died on Calvary, thereby purchasing an eternal salvation for our guilty race.

This manifestation of benevolence stands in startling contrast with the spirit of our world, which is proud, rebellious unbelief. Sin does indeed present itself in many forms, and is called by many names; but the ruling spirit in the heart of man is *selfishness*. We cannot escape its presence, for it meets us in every thoroughfare of life: in all our social, commercial, and political relations; in the young and the old, the moral and the immoral; yes, strange as it may seem, even among those who claim to be influenced by the noblest and holiest motives.

While we recognize selfishness as the great prevailing form of sin, an examination of the many phases in which selfishness reveals itself, will compel us to confess that *covetousness*—taken in that restricted sense in which it is used to express the inordinate desire of obtaining and hoarding property—



is the most prevalent and dangerous form of selfishness. Careful observation will assure us that, in the Christian world at least, this form of selfishness has an alarming universality. Thousands readily yield to its insidious pretences who are accustomed to look with amazement upon all other forms of sin; and while they despise the enslavement of others, fail to see the chains by which they are bound.

The love of property seems to be a native principle of the mind, existing in some degree of development wherever man is found. Viewing it in its healthy operation, there is nothing in it calling for condemnation; but when allowed to gain the mastery, it is the most rapacious and tyrannical of all the human passions, and has ever called forth the severest rebuke of the moralist, and the keenest ridicule of the satirist. It wields a powerful influence in instilling habits of industry and economy; and there are advantages and refinements which seem to depend upon it for existence. But when it has once gone beyond the design for which it was implanted, it crushes with fearful malignity all the blessings that grew in its path; it associates with itself the worst of all the vices, and, from the company following in

its train, proves itself to be the prolific parent of a thousand schemes of dishonesty and oppression.

Yet there is probably no form of sin which is denounced in the word of God more plainly or frequently than covetousness. The Old Testament Scriptures are full of warnings and threatenings against it. Our Saviour often refers to this sin when addressing his apostles or the multitude, and always passes upon it the most severe condemnation. The Apostle Paul makes the broad assertion, that "the love of money is the root of all evil," and the observation of eighteen hundred years attests its truth. He describes the covetous man as an idolater, than whom there is no more offensive character in the sight of God.

If it be asked, Why then the alarming progress it has made? the answer is, There is no sin so ensnaring, or more apt to gain the mastery of the soul. It acquires its commanding power by almost imperceptible advances, carefully administering soothing opiates to the conscience, and thus quietly assumes its supremacy in the heart. Having gained this despotic authority, it only presents such motives for action as avail to continue the enchantment and thralldom of

its victim. It rarely suggests the hoarding of money, and the acquirement of houses and lands, for the mere desire of accumulation; much less does it propose the gratification of unholy and depraved passions. Its efforts are made before the character is fixed, and when the heart is the most readily deceived. Assuming the garb of prudence, it comes to the young man commencing business, and whispers of the necessity of securing a reasonable competency or independence; but the principles which it inculcates, as the necessary means to obtain the desired end, lead with certain steps to avarice. When he comes to mature years, and has acquired all his most sanguine wishes led him to seek, instead of releasing its hold, a firmer grasp is obtained under the alleged propriety of making such a wise provision for the future as may secure him from the misfortunes incident to the decline of life. This provision is made; and when we expect the long-closed heart to open to the noble influences of beneficence, it fastens upon the purest feelings of his nature, and suggests the necessity of procuring and setting aside an abundance for his family, who may be soon called upon to contend with the heartlessness of the world, without the protection

of his strong arm. Or, if such ties are wanting, it offers the magnificent but deceptive delusion of hoarding, while life lasts, to erect a noble foundation of charity to bless the succeeding generation. Thus the bold game of deception is carried on; and the soul, often unconscious of its folly, yields to the gilded sophism; the heart grows hard and insensible to the pressing claims of God and humanity, until at last it sinks into the embrace of death—a death that never dies!

The perils of which we speak not only threaten the man of the world, whose ear is closed to the claims of God and religion, but demand watchfulness on the part of the Christian. We do not hazard too much when we say that *covetousness is the great sin of the Church*. It has been brought about in this manner. That godliness which is particularly profitable in securing a place in the kingdom of heaven, has also a provision for the present life. This is the basis of that temporal prosperity which is a marked characteristic of all Christian lands. The restraints which religion puts upon those passions and appetites that consume the means of the wicked man, enable its possessor to accumulate more property than is

actually necessary for his physical and social wants. It has taught him to be "diligent in business," and he has realized that "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich." Upon the proper use of this superfluity the contest begins. If the deceitfulness of the heart and the selfish influences with which he is surrounded, gain the ascendancy, he turns the blessing of God into a curse. This has been the sad history of many "unfaithful and unprofitable servants." Yet God has not neglected to warn his servants on this perilous point in their lives. He says:—

"Beware, lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, and when thy flocks and herds are multiplied, and thy silver and thy gold are multiplied; then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, and thou say in thy heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth."

If you have observed the lives of those who sustain Church relations, you will at once perceive the force of the following statement from an eminent minister of Christ. If in danger, may it convey a timely warning to your soul! He says:—

"The love of money has proved the eternal overthrow of more professing Christians

than any other sin, because it is almost the only crime that can be perpetrated, and yet anything like a decent profession of religion maintained."

If what we have written is founded in truth, it will follow that one of the pressing wants of the world and the Church, is a remedy for covetousness. So far in the history of the world, no remedy provided by the highest wisdom of man, has gone further than an attempt to correct what might be called its excesses. Nor is it probable that human effort can go a step beyond this. But can it be thought, by any intelligent Christian, that God has neglected to provide in his word a course of action or practice which will fully counteract its evil influences, and correct the wanderings of man when he has forsaken the path of righteousness? Why, then, is there not a well-defined principle and practice of beneficence taught in the Church—such a practice as would not only be a bulwark for the personal safety of its members, but make the progress of Christianity a triumphal march among the powers of the earth? Let the question be answered in the eloquent words of the author of Mammon:—

“In the early age of the Christian Church,

the heavenly art of embalming property and making it immortal, was not only known but practiced; but, like the process of another embalming, it has now, for ages, been practically lost. Not that its principles have been unknown: these have always presented themselves on the page of truth in lines of living light. But, though benevolence has never been unknown as a theory, the perverting influence of a worldly spirit has been rendering it more and more impracticable as an art. So that now, when the obvious application of its principles is pointed out, and the necessity of carrying these principles into practice is daily becoming more urgent, we begin to be aware of the vast distance to which the Church has been drifted from the course of its duty by the current of the world, and how difficult it will be to effect a return."

God is stirring up the Church to a sense of its delinquency on this important subject; and we are sanguine in the expectation that the day is not far distant, when the divine plan of systematic beneficence will become a living power in the Church of Christ. The strongholds of Satan trembled to the foundations, when the Church, after a sleep of a thousand years, started again in its



missionary operations. It appears now, to many far-seeing watchmen on the walls of Zion, that it needs but the revival of this companion spirit, and the kingdoms of this world will speedily become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour. And, as this opinion does not come from a class of enthusiasts, but from sober, earnest-hearted laborers in the great work of salvation, it claims our prayerful attention. It cannot be otherwise than of interest to those who are striving to "escape the corruption that is in the world through lust," and who desire to be influenced by the mind that was in their blessed Master. Even if not intent upon seeking the salvation of your soul, the attention that is bestowed upon it by an awakening Church ought to engage your thoughts long enough to make it a matter of careful consideration.

We are convinced that no manner of investigation is more important and determinate than to turn at once to God's revealed will, and seek, in its luminous pages, the principle and rules by which we may "honor God with our substance." We shall not fail to arrive at some definite conclusion, recommending itself to our conscience and reason, that will be not only for the glory of God,



but for our personal happiness and advancement in the divine life. Let us go, then, "to the law, and to the testimony ; if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us."

## CHAPTER II.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE CONCERNING THE  
ORIGIN AND USE OF PROPERTY.

WE propose now to inquire into the plain teaching of the Bible in relation to the origin and right use of property. The examination, of necessity, will be somewhat limited, but sufficient to aid us in forming a right judgment.

1. *God is the source of all property.* The fact of creation gives the Creator an original and supreme right over all created things, and his preservation of them confirms his title. Therefore the farthest reach of man's power cannot go beyond the collection and profitable employment of God's property. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine." "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine . . . . for the world is mine and the fullness thereof." "The silver is

mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."

2. *The possession of property is the gift of God.* "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." "If ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full." "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich." "Both riches and honor come of thee." "The generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house." "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life." Nor should we forget that the Bible presents many instances of good men, who were rich because of the special blessing of God. Of this class were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon.

3. *Property is not essential to present or future happiness, but is often a source of care and trouble.* "A good name is rather

to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." "I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. . . . Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

Not only may we point to thousands of God's children who have rejoicingly passed their days in the vale of poverty, but we will find that when they might have possessed wealth they chose other blessings. Solomon asked wisdom in preference to riches, and God gave him both, because he had chosen wisely. Agur prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." "Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away." "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches." "Behold, these are the ungodly,

who prosper in the world; they increase in riches . . . Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction." "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." The ground of the rich man, in the parable, brought forth plentifully; but when he thought to say to his soul, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

4. *The possession of property has a tendency to alienate the heart from God.* "The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Jesus said to the young man inquiring, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? . . . If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But

when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily, I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." "They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

5. *Riches do not recommend the possessor to the favor of God.* "God accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." "The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all." "Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord." Many that were rich cast much money into the treasury of the temple. "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. Jesus called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast

in of their abundance : but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." This same truth is taught us in the many examples in which God has "chosen the poor of this world." Moses was the son of a poor Levite; Gideon was a thresher; David was a shepherd; Amos was a herdsman; and the apostles chosen by the Saviour were poor and unlearned.

6. *The amplest recompense is promised to liberality.* "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack." "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward." "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure,



pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." "Charge them that are rich in this world, . . . that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase : so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

7. *God denounces covetousness in the strongest terms.* "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him." "They covet fields, and take them by violence ; and houses, and take them away : so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the Lord ; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks." "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "For this ye know, that no . . . covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of



God." Nor is the Bible wanting in examples of God's punishment of covetous persons. Balaam, Gehazi, and Judas stand as eternal way-marks, indicating how great is God's wrath against covetousness.

The passages which we have quoted are but a few among the many which might be brought to bear upon the subject in hand; yet sufficient, if we let them have proper weight in our hearts, to lead us to an understanding of the fundamental principles of beneficence; and they will prepare our minds for further investigation. They contain instruction for all time, and for all people; and are not invalidated by the abrogation of one dispensation, and the bringing in of another.

Taking these passages of Scripture, and combining them into a harmonious whole, what do they teach in relation to the possession and use of property? Can we not safely deduce from them the following propositions?—

1. All property has its origin in the Creator; and man, when he comes lawfully into the possession of it, receives it as a gift from God.

2. The possession of property is not necessary for temporal happiness, nor to secure the favor of God in the life to come.

3. The only lawful use of property is to employ it in beneficence, or at least so much of it as is not necessary for our temporal wants.

4. The only safe way to increase property is to employ it as God commands.

The thought may arise in your mind that these principles formed no part of your early religious instructions, nor are they practiced by those among whom you worship as a Christian. But let not such thoughts obstruct the truth, as this investigation may present it. We are not inquiring what is the teaching and practice of the Church, nor of our best commercial circles; but are seeking for light from God's word to guide us to a right use of the property he has in his goodness placed in our hands. In governments, judicious reforms are often carried out by a strict examination and construction of the constitution under which they act: religious institutions may profit by a like course, if pursued in honesty.

## CHAPTER III.

THE DIVINE PLAN OF BENEFICENCE UNDER THE  
MOSAIC DISPENSATION.

THE passages of Scripture set forth in the previous chapter indicate the general principles which should guide us in the use of property, but do not command the practice of beneficence as a system. But may we not expect, *a priori*, in the selection of a people to whom God designed a particular communication, to find revealed a system of beneficence as an integral part of the laws by which they were to be governed. This will appear the more probable when we consider that the selection of a people was not only designed to extend a knowledge of God, but to present its members "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The giving of property as a religious duty, in accordance with an express command of God, in which was also indicated the character of the gift, seems to date back to the sacrifices of the first family. As we pass down the sacred history, we find Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek, priest of the most high

God, as a token of his gratitude to God for a special benefit. What strikes us as peculiar in this transaction is, that Abraham gave one-tenth of the spoils, Heb. vii, 4, and in such a manner as shows it to have been the custom of the age. We also find Jacob, in the vow which he made at Bethel, covenanting with God to give him one-tenth of all his prosperity. There can be scarcely a doubt in the mind of the intelligent reader that a system of beneficence was in operation long before the giving of the Law upon Sinai. It did not rest upon some shadowy obligation, but was recognized as a high and holy duty—broad in principle, and efficient in practice.

*What proportion of property did God, in the organization of the Jewish Church, command to be set aside for the purpose of beneficence?*

The Jewish people were commanded to appropriate the tenth part of the produce of their fields for the maintenance of the Levites. Num. xviii, 21. This tithe was paid not only from the vegetable products of the land, but it included also their goats, sheep, and horned cattle. Lev. xxvii, 32. Of the nine parts that remained after the tithes were paid to the Levites, they set aside an-

other tenth part, which was applied toward celebrating certain feasts in the temple at Jerusalem. Deut. xiv, 22, 23. Every third year this tithe was retained at home, instead of being sent to the temple as a portion for the poor. Deut. xiv, 28. Besides this they were to abstain from all the produce of newly-planted fruit-trees for the first three years, it being accounted uncircumcised or unholy: the produce of the fourth year was declared holy, and was to be dedicated to the Lord. Lev. xix, 23. These fruits of the fourth year were sent to the temple, or their equivalent was paid in money to the priests. They also offered to God every year "the first of all the fruits of the year."

This contribution, large as it was, was chiefly designed for the temple service. An ample provision was made for the poor from other sources. The people were commanded, when they reaped, to leave untouched the corners of the fields; nor were they permitted to gather the gleanings of the harvest of any kind. Lev. xix, 9, 10. In the later days of the nation, to prevent fraud, it was determined to leave the sixtieth part of the land as a proper proportion for the poor. Every seventh year the land kept a Sabbath, in

which they did not sow; and whatever grew in the fields this year was the common property of all—the servant as well as the master. Exod. xxiii, 10, 11. In this seventh year all debts were remitted; Deut. xv, 1, 2; the slaves of the nation were also liberated. Exod. xxi, 2. All this was a special provision made for the poor; and it is further enjoined upon them when they made a feast to remember the poor.

But this was not all. We are to add to it the ransom that was paid for the first-born male of every family and of the flocks; the half-shekels for the sanctuary; the three journeys each year to Jerusalem to celebrate the great feasts, where “no one was to appear before the Lord empty.” Even this enumeration does not take in all the contributions that the Jewish system of beneficence required.

We have no doubt many would be led to presume that *voluntary contributions* would find no place under such a comprehensive and exacting system. A reference to their history proves the contrary, and establishes a fact, which we wish kept in mind, that such a system had its highest valuation in the cultivation of a beneficent spirit fully equal to any demand that circumstances

might lay upon it. Some of these voluntary contributions are worthy our attention.

When the Tabernacle was to be built in the wilderness, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it *willingly* with his heart ye shall take my offering." No sooner was the opportunity given than "they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold; and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord." Not only did the males—heads of families—contribute, but we are told that "all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen." Indeed, such a holy ardor incited them to give largely that they had need of restraint. Those who had charge of the work said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make." When the Tabernacle was dedicated to the service of the Lord the same liberal spirit was manifested. These contributions, it should be remem-



bered, came from a nation that numbered but little more than half a million of males over twenty years of age, encamped in a territory not their own, and but lately escaped from bondage.

The building and dedication of the temple was a much more liberal display of beneficence. David proposed building it, but God gave the coveted honor to his illustrious son. This, however, did not abate his interest in the great work. In the midst of the most troublous times, he commenced to gather together the material, with a zeal and munificence that strikes us with astonishment. "I have prepared for the house of the Lord," he says to Solomon, "a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver: and of brass and iron without weight, for it is in abundance; timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto." Solomon continued the work in the same spirit of liberality. One hundred and fifty thousand men were engaged in the rougher part of the labor; the wisest artisans of neighboring nations were employed on the finer work. He seems not to have used any of the treasure which his father prepared in its construction, but placed it as a permanent



treasure in the coffers of the temple. At last the world-renowned structure was completed, at a cost which has been estimated at not less than three thousand millions of dollars. The charities of our day dwindle into insignificance when compared to it. The beneficence manifested at the dedication was on the same liberal scale. Remember, this was not a tax laid upon the people, given grudgingly at first, and then heralded by the givers as a magnanimous act. The record of the transaction places the principles by which they were actuated beyond all doubt. The historian says: "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly; because with *perfect heart* they offered *willingly* to the Lord." "David said, But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and *of thine own have we given thee.*"

It will be seen at a glance, that those who speak of the beneficence of the Jews as a contribution of one-tenth of their annual prosperity, commit a great error. It has been estimated that not less than *one-third* of their annual income was given to the service of the temple, the instruction of the people by the Levites, and for the maintenance of the

poor. Some writers have not hesitated to say, that nearly if not quite one-half of the income was given away.

It is not intended to assert that the institutions of the Mosaic dispensation are binding on us as a Christian people. We ought to be influenced by a larger spirit. The law, however, "was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;" and we may at least expect to find in it the *principles* to guide us in our beneficence.

But what was the design of this grand system of beneficence? Not to entail poverty upon the nation, as the best condition for a people who would serve God; for they were promised prosperity in proportion as they gave obedience to these commands; and we know there was less pauperism in Judea than in any other nation in their day. Not that there was an absolute necessity for this expensive temple service, as an instrument in the salvation of souls; for the same object is equally well provided for under the Christian dispensation, with greater simplicity and with less expense. Not that God is actually dependent upon those who have wealth for the support of his poor and unfortunate children; for he could send them manna and quails, as he did to a whole nation in their

journey from Egypt, or provide for them in a thousand other ways unknown to us.

If we would rightly understand the meaning of this system, we must view it from a proper position. We must see in it our heavenly Father training a nation for some grand object. Can we not at once see that the chief design was to inculcate important principles? How then shall we understand this plan of beneficence? The following propositions seem to us to be a summary of its teachings:—

1. It was designed to teach his chosen people that he was the source of all property; that by placing them in possession of it for a limited time, he did not waive his claim, but constituted them his stewards to dispose of it both for his glory and the benefit of the holder. This appears to be the central principle, so plainly set forth that a child may comprehend it.

2. To give practical efficiency to this principle, it was incorporated into a *system*, comprehensive but simple, and enforced by the highest authority.

3. It bound the services of the sanctuary, and benevolence to our fellow-men, by an indissoluble bond; for it placed the temple service—including the maintenance of the

priests, and a sufficient provision for the poor—under equal obligation, and provided for them in the same system.

4. It brought the whole secular life of the nation under the influences of religion, producing the sanctification of the common actions of life.

The *specific system* which was provided for the Jewish Church has passed away, but its *principles* remain. This will become the more apparent, when we consider that all the objects for which it was provided still exist.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BENEFICENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

IN turning to the New Testament Scriptures to investigate the beneficent operations of the Christian Church, we may be allowed a few remarks which are deemed important, as we design proceeding intelligently and in the right spirit.

The economy which God gave to the Jews was designed for a single nation, and that nation not a large one. It is to be looked upon as preparing a people for some great work, not as a system competent to perform the work for which the preparation was made. But the Christian dispensation is final, designed to be world-wide, and for all coming time. The well-known command was, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations—and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." May we not expect, therefore, to find in this new dispensation a system of beneficence, which, while it is based upon the comprehensive principles already elucidated, will provide for a like liberal, world-wide policy? We see

God enlarging and simplifying the means of salvation; may we not expect to see the system of beneficence enlarged and simplified on a corresponding scale? It must at least be equal to the grand design of the world's conversion. While the Jewish system was of necessity conservative, it is equally necessary that the Christian system should be aggressive.

The history of the Christian Church in its earliest days is found in the Acts of the Apostles. This book is what it purports to be, a record of the most conspicuous acts of the Gospel company. It is not after the manner of many of our modern Church histories, an elaborate theory of Christianity supposed, and then the actions of these early Christians construed so as to support the theory. We are, therefore, to seek the principles by which they were guided, by an examination of the facts presented to us. More than this may be premised. In examining the record of the Christian Church, as the history of a new institution, we may not expect to find the details of a well-defined system, but to see the principles of the founder embodied in a simple, comprehensive manner, as time and circumstances bring about the necessity for their exercise.

Not only will their practice be in direct accordance with the Master's principles, but also imbued with the spirit of his living example. We are too much accustomed to consider everything connected with the primitive Christians as supernatural, and by this erroneous judgment we strive to free ourselves from the suggestions and obligations implied in their brilliant example. It was, indeed, a new and wondrous life that influenced them, but nothing more than the divine life. Such a life every one who has taken the name of Christ should possess, and in equal fullness.

We may turn now to the history of the primitive Church. We find the little company assembled at Jerusalem, in obedience to the Saviour's command, waiting for the promise of the Father, the descent of the Holy Ghost. It comes like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and fills the house. Appearing on their heads as cloven tongues of fire, it penetrates their hearts, and they begin to speak with tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance. The result of this outpouring of the Spirit is the conversion of about three thousand souls, who were united by this regeneration to the company of the apostles. "All that believed were together,

and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." This grand demonstration of beneficence is again spoken of in the fourth chapter, and the manner of it is noted in more specific detail. "Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to every man as he had need."

These passages of Scripture, greatly to the injury of the Church, have been wrested from their true meaning, to sustain the erratic notion of a community system. A careful examination of the occurrences, by the aid of the customs peculiar to that age, will lead us to an entirely different conclusion.

Inequality of wealth is not altogether an arbitrary distinction, designed to be destroyed by Christianity. It is no doubt peculiar to a sinful world; and is a wise and benevolent appointment of God, suited to our present condition, and designed to give scope to the cultivation of certain Christian virtues. Under the Jewish econ-



omy, God enforces the unceasing obligation of his command to provide for the poor by the assertion, "The poor shall never cease out of the land." Christ assured his disciples, "Ye have the poor always with you." Now, because the community system is discarded by the wisest and best men, has proven absurd in practice, and is opposed to the general teachings of Scripture, many have taken a prejudiced view of this first manifestation of beneficence by the Church. But a careful examination will certainly remove all apparent grounds for skeptical criticism.

The persons converted on this memorable occasion were principally those who had come from a distance to keep the feast of the Passover. There is no good reason to suppose they were the needy and unfortunate; much less were they beggars, or the refuse of the population. At all the great religious feasts of the Jews, those who came from a distance brought sufficient provision for the journey and the short time they expected to remain, but nothing beyond this. The conversion of three thousand of these strangers cast them out of the society of the Jews and into the company of the disciples. There is no doubt this remarka-

ble outpouring of the Spirit, resulting in their conversion, detained them longer from their homes than they had anticipated, and left them without immediate means of support. God had a design in their detention. They were receiving instruction in the truths of the Gospel, that they might bear with them to their homes a correct knowledge of the plan of salvation. To meet this necessity, the disciples sold such portions of their possessions as were sufficient to supply the present need of every man.

That it was a free-will offering, according to the ability and liberality of the individual making it, and not a surrender of all they had, is evident; for one is mentioned who sold all his land, another who sold a part only. The words of Peter to Ananias prove this to be the proper interpretation: "Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" The sin of Ananias was not that he offered only a part of the price of his possessions, but that he lied unto God; pretending that the money he offered the apostle was the whole avails of his land, when it was only a part.

It appears, then, that this early act of beneficence on the part of the Christian Church,

which is so worthy of remembrance as honorable in them and an example to us, was a consecration of their property to the service of religion ; and like all healthy, heaven-directed charity, it was sufficiently expansive to meet the necessities of the occasion which called it forth. Not long after, deacons were appointed, whose principal duty was to distribute the bounty of the Church daily among the poor.

Although no particular account of the system which gave stability and efficiency to their beneficence is found in the record, yet we are not to conclude that they were without system. They brought, and “laid it at the apostles’ feet;” and until the appointment of deacons it seems the apostles attended to the distribution. Their beneficence was no fitful feeling, but a settled principle. The Apostle James makes it a distinguishing mark of the Christian religion. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” John makes it no less a test of religion ; for he says, “But whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of com-

passion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

It may be a matter of surprise to some that we have not found a specific rule on this important feature of an active Christianity among the earliest notices of the Church. A little reflection, however, will convince us that we are not to expect any such announcement of a system in the Church at Jerusalem. We have already shown that systematic beneficence is not a new doctrine, peculiar to Christianity. Had it been a new doctrine, there would be some occasion for surprise at the silence of the historian. We should look for such a modification of the old Jewish system, as would be necessary to conform it to the invigorating spirit of the Christian dispensation. These changes would be easily made, and attract but little attention. We must not fail to bear in mind that the history of the Church contained in the Acts of the Apostles was not so much designed to convey a knowledge of the form and discipline of the Church, as the progress it made in extending the kingdom of Christ. But when new Churches were organized, in which the converts had been altogether or principally idolaters, and unacquainted with the Jewish economy, we may suppose that

specific direction would be given to them concerning beneficence, when the occasion required it, no less than on other duties which their former religion had not inculcated. Therefore, in seeking such a rule, we may turn with greater probability of success to the epistles written to the Churches which had been organized beyond the immediate range of Jewish influence.

The search is a short one, for, in the first epistle to the Corinthian Church, St. Paul, giving directions concerning a collection for the impoverished disciples at Jerusalem, makes the following order :—

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

This, we believe, is the law of Systematic Beneficence, to which all Christians should conform.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

THE position, then, which we propose to occupy, is, that the Apostle Paul, writing to the Church at Corinth, under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, teaches the Christian Law of Systematic Beneficence. We will quote again this important passage.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

This system, commanded by St. Paul, was modeled upon a well-known custom of the Jewish Church in its later days. One of their plans of making provision for the poor was to make a collection on the Sabbath day. A purse was provided in every synagogue to receive these weekly contributions, which was called “The purse of the Alms.”

The modifications of the apostle consisted in changing the time of contribution from the Sabbath day to the Lord's day, and determining the amount of the contribution to be in proportion as God had prospered the giver. The first modification was necessary for the perpetuation of the system; the second, essential to its highest purpose; for the system was not only designed to meet the obligations of the Church in a pecuniary point of view, but also to discipline the religious affections, leading to higher attainments in the divine life.

It is advisable to note in this place, that the system is in the highest degree mandatory. *It is a command, not an exhortation.* If we are able to show the great advantages of such a system, both to the Church and yourself, you may be induced to adopt it; but it cannot have that influence on your heart and life that is desirable, without you see in it a positive command. You will not even regard it in a proper manner without you have a thorough conviction that it is your *duty*. The command is as specific as that to preach the Gospel, and of no less binding obligation. No one will assert that it does not rest upon as sure a foundation as the change of the Sabbath from the last to



the first day of the week. St. Paul was always careful in his epistles to distinguish between the teachings of the Spirit and the suggestions of his own mind. This is not mentioned as the best system that the apostle could propose; but he says, "as I have given *order* to the Churches of Galatia, ever so *do ye*." If you are inclined to answer that such a system has not been generally practiced in the Church for centuries, instead of invalidating the command you but prove how fearfully the Church of the living God "has been blinded by the god of this world," and insensibly seduced from the practice of that period which is appealed to by all Christians as the brightest example of a pure, active Christianity. The command to preach the Gospel to every creature was neglected for near a thousand years. But does any intelligent Christian argue from this negligence that the command of the Saviour was abrogated? It will be the highest wisdom in us to confess our ignorance and delinquencies with proper humiliation, and return to the "old paths."

We also affirm that it was designed as a *general rule*. This will oppose the idea which might arise in the minds of some, that it was for the Church at Corinth alone,



or for a few Churches in that immediate vicinity. There is evidence in the passage itself to refute such an interpretation of the rule. "As I have given order to the *Churches* of Galatia, even so do ye." The same order was given to all the Churches of Achaia, of which province Corinth was the capital. So also was it given to the Churches in Macedonia, although they were in "deep poverty;" and they returned a noble response. We have reason to believe that the command was received and obeyed by all the Churches with whom the apostle had any intercourse. The epistle is directed not alone to the Corinthians, but "*to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ.*" There are, in this same epistle, important rules relating to Church discipline, and precepts teaching purity of life, that were written to meet the peculiar state of affairs then existing at Corinth: does any one doubt that they were intended for the Church in all places, and for all coming time? The principles of interpretation that would confine the application of this rule to the Corinthians alone, would compel us to lay aside all the epistles. Yet we have heard this objection urged against it time and again. We must allow that God, by

his spirit of inspiration, speaks to the whole body of Christians through the epistles addressed to local Churches, and for all ages, or we have no "sufficient rule either for our faith or practice."

The *principle* which was to influence them in their beneficence, although not specifically set forth by the inspired writer, is of the greatest importance to a clear understanding of the rule, and actually necessary to produce the two-fold benefit intended. The immediate design of the contribution was to provide for the wants of the poor saints at Jerusalem. A theme was here offered to the apostle that would afford the amplest scope for his unrivalled powers as a speaker. From the Church at Jerusalem had proceeded the great work of the world's conversion, of which the Corinthians had been the happy recipients; and therefore they might, with propriety, have been considered as specially indebted to these poor saints. They who now were in need of charity, had at one time distributed liberally of their abundance, supplying the necessities of the poor; but passing a few years in the midst of severe persecutions for the sake of the truth had stripped them of their worldly means, and they were in poverty. Can any one doubt that the

presence of the "apostle to the Gentiles," who had been the honored instrument in the establishment of the Church at Corinth, exercising that wonderful gift of eloquence which pierced the hardened conscience of the guilty Felix, would have produced a powerful impression?—can any one doubt his success in procuring a contribution fully equal to their ability had he presented them a glowing statement of the necessities of their brethren—their persecutions, and the manner in which they had borne the spoiling of their goods? Like their poor neighbors of Macedonia, they could have been brought to give beyond their ability. But he passes by these topics, which form the staple of appeals in our days, and urges his claim through the holiest feelings of their renewed nature. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

He would have them consider how greatly they were indebted to a Saviour's love. He would have them remember that Jesus had laid aside the glory which he had with the Father, and became subject to the sorrows and poverty of earth until he had not where to lay his head, that they might become

heirs of God; he would have them go and gaze upon the agony of Gethsemane, the terror of the cross, and then give for the sake of such a Saviour. For he well knew that if they were influenced in their beneficence by this holy principle, not only would the amount of their contribution answer the end proposed, but obtain favor with God, and leave a sanctifying influence on their hearts. It need not be urged upon the intelligent reader that this is a matter of the highest importance. The charity of the present day seems rather to be under the impulse of the emotions than to flow from any well-defined principle. In most instances he is the successful advocate of a benevolent scheme who can best enlist their sympathies for the *object*, and has the least to say about obligation and spiritual growth. This whole system of periodical play upon the emotions is deadly to principle. Any stream of beneficence that has not its fountain-head at the cross of Christ must be fluctuating in its flow, and doubtful in its influence upon the heart.

It is this principle which modern beneficence stands in need of. It gives the only value to charity, and makes each act an occasion of religious joy. This gives the

widow's mite value beyond all computation, exalting it far above the largest gift from any other motives. It gives, even to a cup of cold water, an eternal remembrance, and especial commendation from the King of heaven. David said, "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth;" but our Saviour tells us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We have no hope of any great reform in our beneficence until this principle has a permanent lodgment in the heart. It may be said to be of greater importance than system, for it alone will furnish a proper foundation for system.

We cannot forbear quoting in this place some eloquent words from "Mammon" that have a direct bearing on this point. "Thus, while false religion makes alms-deeds a substitute for piety, the Gospel heightens benevolence into one of the most spiritual and improving duties the Christian can perform. For, by imbuing his heart with the love of God, it enables him to taste the god-like enjoyment of doing good; and, by teaching him to refer all his acts of benevolence to Christ, to perform them as expressions of gratitude to him, to hope for their accept-

ance through him, and to pray that they may tend to his glory, it keeps him near to the cross, in an atmosphere of spiritual and elevated piety. And when once he has become native to the element, when the expansive, delightful, irresistible power of the Saviour's grace has become his ruling motive, he would feel an inferior principle to be little less than degradation and bondage. He accounts the costliest sacrifice he can offer as poor; resents the limits which a cold and calculating selfishness would impose on his offering as chains and fetters; and if called upon to pour forth his blood as a libation on the altar of Christian sacrifice, he would feel that he had rendered an ample explanation of his conduct by saying, with the apostle, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.'"

Having made these remarks, which seemed to us necessary to a right apprehension of the system, we invite your attention to the direct teachings of this incomparable rule.

1. *It provides a charitable fund in the possession of every Christian, to be drawn upon as occasion requires.*

"Let every one of you lay by him in store." The design of the apostle looks forward to the accumulation of a fund which *belongs* to

the Lord, and which the possessor holds as a steward, ready to distribute whenever a charitable call is made. Certainly this is commendable in whatever light it is viewed; and suggests that it is acceptable as a skillful financial arrangement. It would be folly to argue that any system of distribution can be successful that has not permanent and accessible resources. The experiment of doing business without capital is hazardous, we might say foolish, and the result is apt to be time spent to little or no purpose.

The occasions of charity—laying aside the periodical calls of our well-known and praiseworthy benevolent institutions—are frequent, nor can we expect them to be less so; indeed, quite too frequent for the consciences of those who have not yet learned “that it is more blessed to give than to receive.” The calls of the destitute, the sick, the unfortunate, come within the sphere of our own distribution, and generally require immediate attention. How often do these calls come when, as the phrase is, “we are unprepared!” There may not be wanting the will to give; but either the funds are not in our hands, or what is in our possession has already been laid aside for secular purposes. Even if the applicant is not turned away empty, the



contribution comes so "grudgingly" that the giver fails entirely to receive any spiritual benefit from it. But this plan of setting aside a fund consecrated to the Lord, places our beneficence in a position where it is not affected by such accidents and untoward circumstances. One who provides for his beneficence on this plan, not only finds himself ready when called upon, but he soon learns the blessing of doing good; he knows that "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." "Nothing remains but to make the appropriation. Such a man has no conflict with covetousness. The battle has been fought, and the victory won."

There are those who have tested this plan, and their testimony is too valuable to be unnoticed in an essay of this character. The plan has peculiar advantages for those who are poor and in moderate circumstances in life. It alone can prepare them to give with ease and cheerfulness. This has been well illustrated by one whom we are accustomed to call a poor man. A shoemaker is mentioned in an Episcopal periodical at Burlington, New Jersey, whose benevolence was known to be large for one in his circumstances. Being asked how he contrived to give so much, he replied that it was easily



done by obeying St. Paul's precept in 1 Cor. xvi, 2. "I earn," said he, "one day with another, about a dollar a day, and I can, without inconvenience to myself or family, lay by five cents of this sum for charitable purposes; the amount is thirty cents a week. My wife takes in sewing and washing, and earns something like two dollars a week, and she lays by ten cents of that. My children each of them earn a shilling or two, and are glad to contribute their penny; so that altogether we *lay by us in store* forty cents a week. And if we have been unusually prospered, we contribute something more. The weekly amount is deposited every Sunday morning in a box kept for that purpose, and reserved for future use. Thus, by the small earnings, we have learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive." The simplicity and efficiency of this plan, as proved by this example, removes all necessity for exposition and exhortation. "The way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein." The system needs but a trial by those whose means are small, but whose hearts willingly respond to calls for benevolence. God has here provided a plan by which they may have the continued luxury of giving for his sake.

Nor is this system, which some might be disposed to say was designed for the poor alone, without equal advantages to the rich man. The competition in business, and the burning desire to be wealthy, which seems to be a peculiarity of our age, act very unfavorably upon those who acknowledge the justice of the claims of charity. Their capital is employed so as to present a bulwark against an extended beneficence, and the conscience is appeased with the thought that at some future time it will not be so, when they will be able to respond to all calls in a handsome manner. Many a lawful claimant has been turned away, or but indifferently supplied, because nothing was *laid by in store*, and the demands of business absorbed all the means at command. But those in the wealthier walks of life who have tested this system, find that it is the only one ever devised which seemed fully to meet their situation. A merchant says, "It is now several years since I adopted this plan, and under it I have acquired a handsome capital, and have been prospered beyond my most sanguine expectations. *Although constantly giving, I have never yet touched the bottom of my fund*, and have been frequently surprised to find what large drafts it would

bear. This system has been of great advantage to me, enabling me to feel that my life is directly employed for God. It has afforded me happiness in enabling me to portion out the Lord's money, and has enlisted my mind more in the progress of Christ's cause."

"A distinguished citizen says of the system, 'I have practiced it for several years, and found a blessing in it. It is God's own plan, and therefore better than any other. So every one will find it who will try it. *It increases our charity fund manifold*, without our perceiving any diminution of capital or income; and the fund thus set apart being consecrated to the Lord, we are able to distribute it without grudging, and with a more unbiased judgment, as occasion requires. I am one of the witnesses for God, that in this matter, as in all others, he is good.'"

The apostle assigns as a reason that they should lay by them in store, "That there be no gatherings when I come." These words, which are overlooked by a majority of readers, have, if we are not mistaken, a deep significance. The apostle, while engaged in his ordinary labors as a minister of the Gospel, was also an agent for this charity fund. We cannot suppose that his haste

in conveying the funds contributed to Jerusalem, would not allow him sufficient time at Corinth to visit the Churches and collect a contribution in person, for he proposes in the sixth verse of the same chapter to spend the winter with them. We are therefore compelled to allow that it had an intimate connection with the peculiarities and perfection of the system itself.

It will be noticed that this plan stands in direct opposition to the system of collections practiced in the Churches at this time. Look for a moment at our system. A benevolent society wishes to procure funds: the first step to be taken is to secure a minister, generally a man of superior talent, whose business is to canvass a certain district for this single purpose. The first evil effect of this plan is to deprive a congregation of the services of their pastor, even if they have his regular or occasional services as a preacher. The appointment of one who has been called to preach the Gospel to a labor in which preaching is of secondary importance, is, to say the least of it, of questionable propriety. But by the plan of having a fund set apart in each Christian family, ready to meet calls for charitable purposes, laymen might fill the duties of an

agency with efficiency; or the pastor of each congregation, without respect to his talents or injury to his work, could forward the offerings of his congregations. It would also add to the funds no inconsiderable amount now expended in paying the necessary expenses of traveling agents.

The agent having been procured, he is to make periodical visits to the Churches in his district, and, addressing them directly on the object of his mission, collect as large a sum as possible. To secure this contribution he is expected to present the wants of those whom his agency is designed to benefit in the glowing words of imagination, in startling appeals, and often with coruscations of wit and humorous anecdotes. At the happy moment, when the sympathies of his audience are wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement, the appropriations are received. The immediate result may be a large collection. But is the giver really benefited in his spiritual life? Is he less covetous than he was before? Is there not a lurking suspicion in his mind, when the excitement is over, that he has not been fairly dealt with by the speaker, and that he has not been influenced by right motives?

Now mark the manner of St. Paul. First of all, he did not let it interfere with his regular duties as a minister of the Gospel. Neither did he make an appeal to their sympathy after the manner of the present time. The object of the contribution was in the highest degree worthy, and presented a favorable opportunity for passionate eloquence. But he is silent on this point, and relies upon the presentation of motives lying at the basis of every-day Christian life. He appeals to the reciprocal love of Christ as the prime consideration. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He appeals to their Christian character, and the propriety of rendering it complete. "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." He reminds them, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work ; being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God."

There seems, then, to be an error in our whole system of collections. The apostle writes its condemnation where he says, "that there be no gathering when I come." It would be perilous to give up these agencies at once, or at all, without the Church can be brought back to this system of its primitive days, providing a fund and holding it in readiness to give at the proper time, under the influences of true Christian principle. When we cultivate the right spirit, and adopt the right system, the objects claiming our benevolence will receive all that is desirable, and we shall grow in grace. The investigation, then, leads us to conclude that the desired end can be obtained in no other manner than by *laying by us in store*.

2. *The duty and advantages of providing a permanent and available charitable fund being allowed, the next step leads us to inquire from what source this fund is to be derived?*

The rule provides for this by a stroke of wisdom that cannot be less than divine: "*As God hath prospered him.*" Viewing this as the *standard* of giving, it may be applied with perfect justice to every man, rich or poor, to whom this word of salvation



is sent. If it be examined as a means directed to a particular result—providing a fund for all benevolent purposes—no doubt whatever may be entertained of its efficiency. This feature of the plan is of such charming simplicity, that the effort to present it in a plainer light would seem to be fruitless. It recommends itself to the conscience and judgment of every man who is anxious to live for the glory of God. If it had proposed a specific sum without regard to our worldly condition, the poor and unfortunate might have found it a burden, while the rich and prosperous could have met its claims without the semblance of self-denial. But it comes to you, and says you may meet the requirements of your Maker by appropriating a just *proportion* of the prosperity he is daily giving you. Have you received *nothing*? then nothing is required. Have you received *freely*? then give freely. Does not your conscience tell you it would be avarice to give less?

The principle here assumed is, that God has the supreme ownership of our property; that we are *stewards*, not proprietors of its increase or prosperity. He does not propose to remove it out of our hands, except we prove unfaithful and unprofitable servants;



yet he claims that the increase of it shall be appropriated in beneficence to the cause of salvation and the poor. Let us for a moment suppose that a friend had left a portion of his property in our hands, with instructions, that after supplying our necessary wants the remainder should be applied to the spread of the Gospel and the necessities of the poor, could we honestly spend it in any other manner? Would it not be robbery? So God looks at it. What else did he mean when he said to his people, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

We are to give *as God hath prospered us*. We have examples elsewhere in the Scriptures to assure us that it is a plan with which God is well pleased. When it was known at Antioch, by prophecy, that a great famine was in prospect, we are informed, "Every man *according to his ability*, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea." St. Peter says, "If any man minister—that is, to the necessities of the poor—let him do it as of the ability that God giveth." Every one, then, is to give as God hath prospered him—according to the ability that God giveth.

But it may be profitable to inquire, *What is our ability?* This appears to mean the *increase* of our property without any diminution of its bulk; yet we are inclined to believe that in many cases the spirit of the rule would lay its claim upon something more than the regular increase or income. This treatise may fall into the hands of many who did not recognize the claims of religion and obtain Church membership, until they had accumulated a large amount of property. Others again, who, although they commenced the service of God in their early and unprosperous days, have grown rich without paying due attention to the claims of benevolence; they may not have seen the binding obligation of this rule, and therefore added to their capital sums which should have been given to the cause of God. Now, while we are willing to allow that a man who has always observed this rule is called upon only to give of his income or increase, we cannot say the same of those who have grown rich before they began to apply the rule. John Wesley is a notable example of one who began right and continued right. His income at first was no more than thirty pounds a year; but of this he applied two pounds in beneficence. The next year his income

was sixty pounds; he confined his expenses to twenty-eight pounds, and gave away thirty-two. As his income increased he continued to live on his former allowance. The last entry he made in his private journal was: "For upward of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly. I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can and give all I can; that is, all I have." When dead, his property was found to consist of his clothes, his books, and a carriage. It is computed he gave away, during his lifetime, more than a hundred thousand dollars.

A course of continual accumulation does not seem to be in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. When we propose this, we should ask ourselves the question, in the fear of God and looking forward to the judgment day, Have I done this, or do I propose to do it for the glory of God? Have I not been actuated in this resolution more by the maxims of business and a covetous world than by the example and spirit of my blessed Master? You may be saving to provide an ample or magnificent fortune for your children. Look around and see if, judging by the example of others, you are not preparing a snare for

their souls. You have, perhaps, concluded to accumulate and leave large charities when you die. This prospective benevolence is often more a device of Satan than the teaching of Christianity; for you seem to forget that God, by his blessing, can make the small sum you are able to give to-day, if it is done in the right spirit, go farther than the largest gift when you grow rich or are dying. Would it not be a more grateful exercise for the heart to dispense in charity with your own hand, than to leave the work to your executors? Consider what a hallowed example it would be to your children and the Church. Would not sowing more plentifully enable you to reap more plentifully, and thus greatly enlarge your sphere of usefulness? Have you not withheld, in part at least, because you have not felt confidence in that divine saying of the Saviour, "It is more blessed to give than to receive?"

There are circumstances in which it may not be improper to accumulate a large capital; for some kinds of business cannot be successfully conducted without such an amount of capital as would be useless in others. Such a business may be conducted in a Christian spirit, but only when the whole is consecrated to the glory of God. The better rule is to

place a limitation on the increase of capital, and afterward devote the whole produce to God. We have an example of this manner of honoring God with our substance in the case of Mr. Nathaniel R. Cobb, a young merchant connected with the Baptist Church in Boston. At the age of twenty-three he drew up and subscribed the following covenant:—

“By the grace of God, I will never be worth more than fifty thousand dollars.

“By the grace of God, I will give one-fourth of the net profits of my business to charitable and religious uses.

“If I am ever worth twenty thousand dollars, I will give one-half of my net profits; and if I am ever worth thirty thousand dollars, I will give three-fourths; and the whole after fifty thousand dollars. So help me God, or give to a more faithful steward and set me aside.”

Mr. Cobb adhered to this covenant with conscientious fidelity till he had acquired fifty thousand dollars, after which he gave all his profits. On his death-bed he said to a friend, “By the grace of God—nothing else—by the grace of God I have been enabled, under the influence of these resolutions, to give away more than forty thousand dol-

lars. How good the Lord has been to me!" Now here is an instance of true Christianity. The closing hours of such a life have more of happiness in them than all the gold of this world could purchase. Such lives are worth much to the world, as a proof of what Christianity, intelligently understood and practiced, could do for its salvation.

To carry out the spirit of this rule, which seems to refer immediately to *income*, we inquire, *What proportion of our income should be devoted to charitable and religious purposes?* This is a question of no small importance, and in the end it must be left to the enlightened judgment and conscience of each Christian. We only propose an inquiry on this point with a view of correcting some false impressions too prevalent among Christians. Many have thought one-tenth the proper proportion for all persons, under all circumstances. This has gained favor under the mistaken notion that it is the amount given by the Jews under the Mosaic dispensation. We have already shown this notion to be an error; yet it has been, and continues to be, the proportion given by many good men. Lord Chief-Justice Hale, Rev. Dr. Hammond, Baxter, and Doddridge, each gave one-tenth. Dr. Watts gave a fifth;

Mrs. Rowe one-half. Mr. Wesley, as we have already noticed, gave *all*.

This is the point in the rule that will test our Christian principles, and therefore a scrupulous compliance with it will lead to the greatest spiritual advantage. There can be no question that the amount is to be in proportion to the income, and will vary, in most circumstances, from year to year. The day-laborer, whose income is three or four hundred dollars a year, might find it difficult to give one-tenth of this for charitable purposes; while the merchant or professional man, who clears in his business two or three thousand dollars a year, would scarcely realize the loss of one-tenth. So also the young man commencing business with a limited capital, could not give one-tenth with the same ease that he can now with the ample means he has acquired. Thus it often happens that charity becomes less and less a matter of self-denial and blessing, and covetousness grows in the heart because we do not give as God has prospered us. The plan, then, would seem to be a careful and conscientious assessment of the income, increasing or decreasing with the increase or decrease of our prosperity, as the case might be, and a limitation of the amount of capital,



looking forward to a time when our labor is for God as fully as the man who has been consecrated to his service by the imposition of hands. This was the plan that enabled Mr. Cobb to make his life rich in good works.

We would record another example, principally to show that there is nothing impracticable in the rule. "In consecrating my life anew to God, aware of the enervating influence of riches, and the necessity of *deciding* on a plan of charity *before wealth should bias my judgment*, I adopted the following system: I decided to balance my accounts, as nearly as I could, every month; and reserving such portions of profits as might appear adequate to cover probable losses, to lay aside, by entry on a benevolent account, *one-tenth* of the remaining profits, great or small, as a fund for benevolent expenditure. I further determined, that if at any time my net profits, that is, profits from which clerk-hire and store-expenses had been deducted, should exceed five hundred dollars in a month, I would give twelve and a half per cent.; if over seven hundred dollars, fifteen per cent.; if over nine hundred dollars, seventeen and a half per cent.; if over eleven hundred dollars, twenty per cent.;



if over thirteen hundred dollars, twenty-two and a half per cent.; *thus increasing the proportion on the whole, as God should prosper*, until, at fifteen hundred dollars, I should give twenty-five per cent., or three hundred and seventy-five dollars per month. As capital was of the utmost importance to insure my success in business, I decided not to increase the foregoing scale until I had acquired a certain capital, after which I would give *one-quarter* of all my profits, great or small; and on the acquisition of another certain amount of capital, I decided to give *half*; and on acquiring what I determined would be a full sufficiency of capital, then to give *the whole* of my net profits."

In making the decision how large a proportion of the income shall be devoted to charitable and religious purposes, we should be careful to be guided by an enlightened Christian spirit. There is but little danger of giving too much. The standard of liberality now prevalent among Christians, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, would be found wanting. The question is often, *How much can I give without feeling it?* Was this the spirit that brought the Saviour from the skies to redeem man? Did he do as little as he could, or give himself

unreservedly to the work? If we had the same spirit would we not give all we could, saving for this purpose by industry, economy, and self-denial. Would it not be well for us to sit down and remember all the mercies of the Lord we have received, temporal and spiritual, and propose the solemn question, "How much owest thou thy Lord?" Consider for what purpose he asks in return that which he has bestowed—to bring gladness to sorrowful hearts, and send the Gospel to those without hope and without God in the world. Consider who it is that asks your charity. "Pass by the cross on your way to the altar of oblation, and your richest offering will appear totally unworthy of divine acceptance."

In making provision for our charity, we should consider how much may be obtained by honest industry, economy, and self-denial. The apostle commanded Christians to "labor, working with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have to give to him that needeth." The talent placed in our care has to be returned in due time, and an account given of the labor for its increase. A sad destiny awaits that steward that hides it in a napkin. Says St. Paul, "I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye

ought to support the weak." "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Answer the question to your Saviour and your Judge. We have read of a woman in positively needy circumstances in life who offered to subscribe a penny a week to the funds of a missionary society. Said one, "You are certainly too poor to afford so much." Her answer was, "I spin so many skeins of yarn a week for my maintenance: I will spin *one more*, and that will be a penny for the society." One of the most liberal spirits we ever knew was a woman engaged in a book-binding, who not only gave in charity all she could in any way spare from her weekly wages, but did over-work every week that her charitable fund might be increased. Can that person who accumulates a large property, and then retires from business to spend the remnant of his life in ease and indulgence, take the words of Scripture in his mouth, and say, "None of us liveth unto himself?" We should not try to cease our labors while our lives are spared, for the Saviour says, "Occupy till I come."

Large sums of money are spent in needless self-indulgence, to the great injury of immortal souls. This crime has crept into the Church. There can be no greater folly

perpetrated by an immortal soul than to clothe the body in the trappings of fashion, or pamper its appetites with the appliances of sensuality. Yet pride, and fashion, and gratification of the palate have swallowed up countless sums that in justice belong to the poor. Some think a fashionable prodigality no sin. They have read their Bibles to a poor purpose. The theory, often advocated as an apology for luxury, that the extravagant expenditures of the rich are a source of profit to the poor, is a sophism too flimsy to stand the test of common-sense and observation. Whatever turns industry to waste, is just so much thrown away that ought to have been expended in extending happiness. But this is viewing the evil under its least serious aspect. How many ruin their souls? Extravagance, where it does not lead to immoralities, begets covetousness; covetousness leads often to avarice; avarice to positive injustice; and the torpor of spiritual death steals upon the soul, leading it to eternal ruin.

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, left us an example in this respect that should be held in grateful and continual remembrance. The accountant-general suspecting he had more property than was appa-

rent, or had been returned on the tax-list, sent him the following note, enclosing a copy of the "Excise order for the return of plate." "Reverend sir—As the commissioners cannot doubt you have plate, for which you have hitherto neglected to make an entry," etc. Mr. Wesley returned the following answer: "Sir, I have two silver spoons at London, and two at Bristol, and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread." This was self-denial such as but few Christians practice. Sit down a few moments and carefully calculate how much you spend for the gratification of appetite, how much to gratify unholy desires, how much to compete with the unchristian display of your neighbors. Sum up the items, and ask yourself if it could not be much less without injuring body or soul, and without suffering loss of caste with those whose commendation is worth having. Then ask yourself how many missionaries it might help to support among the heathen; how many Bibles it might purchase for the ignorant; how much pinching want and acute suffering it would alleviate. If your conscience does not urge you to economize, examine your heart and see if you have not forgotten your first love. It is not asked

that you should put on the coarse garments of poverty, or eat the refuse of rich men's tables; but practice a judicious economy, such as will be for the glory of God, and enable you to enjoy the luxury of doing good.

"If any man will be my disciple," said the blessed Saviour, "let him *deny* himself." Self-denial is a mark of Christianity. Christ was himself the most luminous example, but the Church has been rich in lesser lights. The apostles counted not their lives dear unto themselves. Many missionaries of modern days—Carey, Morrison, Cox, Williams, and a great multitude whose names are recorded in the Lamb's book of life—have practiced a system of self-denial which, if not followed to the letter, should be the informing spirit of our actions. What is self-denial? To give one-tenth of a princely income in beneficence, and retain the remainder for personal gratification? No. It is offering to the Lord a sacrifice, however princely, that has cost us something. It is the consecration of time, talents, of personal ease, of convenience, to the service of God, with an intense zeal to make it all-subservient to the interests of his kingdom. Would not self-denial provide us with a

larger revenue for charitable purposes, and thus enlarge our sphere of usefulness and happiness?

3. *The revenue of this charitable fund being drawn from the prosperity which God bestows upon individuals, it is evident that the amount collected, and the benefits flowing from the exercise of the religious affections, will depend upon the number who acknowledge the obligation, and conform to it in their practice.*

This ground is fully covered by the rule, "*Let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.*" The Saviour in his infinite wisdom and love would make every regenerate soul a worker with him in the great plan of salvation; and if, in the matter of benevolence, the obligation to give extended only to those who are rich, the principal design of beneficence, the enriching of the soul to all bountifulness, causing thanksgivings to God, would be thwarted. The rule contemplates that *every one* shall give to whom God has given prosperity. Those who live upon the gifts of charity would not seem to come under the obligation; yet have we seen beggars who shared joyfully their meager pittance with those of the same class who had been less fortunate.



There are few indeed who can claim exception under the rule; none who have a right understanding of it will wish to be excluded. Where there is a willing mind, God rarely fails to provide the means. How many who read this will call to mind some poor widow within the range of their observation, that never fails to give her mite to sustain the Church and its benevolent institutions. Yet few things are of more frequent occurrence than persons of moderate circumstances making the plea that they are not able to give. A more intimate acquaintance with their circumstances will probably convince us that they have no proper sense of the obligations to beneficence, or they have no system in providing for it and bestowing, and give all where they should give but a part.

No one doubts the duty of the rich to give, or that he honors God in so doing. But does God confine those duties which are a means of grace to a few, or design to include all? Are those only to pray who can pray eloquently? Those only to labor who can accomplish much? Some who can give but little, hesitate to give at all, because they think the amount too small to be of any benefit. This is in most cases rather the



suggestion of pride or covetousness than the conviction of the mind. Can he who gazes upon the irresistible current of some large river, bearing on its bosom the stately vessels of commerce, forget that it is made up of trickling drops and insignificant streams, having their origin far away from the busy scenes of man? If only the great ocean furnished exhalations to be returned in grateful showers to the earth, the world would soon become a desert. If the religious charities of our age had received support from the rich alone, they would have achieved but a tithe of the success which has marked them. Our great religious enterprises are no less sustained by the confluence of widow's pennies, and small donations from those in moderate circumstances, than by the liberal donations and bequests of the rich.

There are but few in any community so poor that, with a right disposition, they cannot lay aside a penny a week, or a penny a day. This can be done without curtailing their ordinary table-fare, or interfering with the means used to provide them with proper garments. What poor person would not do this for the privilege of honoring God by putting a Bible into the hands of those who

have never heard of Jesus? They do a great wrong to themselves and others who despise the day of small things. The penny tract has often found its way where the Bible has been refused and the minister could not effect an entrance. You are not asked to give what you have not, but a just proportion of what you receive. It matters not how small the amount may be, if it is no less than what you ought to give. Despise not the smallness of the gift; it may, indeed, fail to elicit the praise of man, but there is an eye in heaven ever watchful that will have respect to it, and keep it in remembrance. Some years ago a missionary in a foreign station witnessed, as he thought, a special blessing attending a yearly donation of twenty dollars, and was induced to inquire from what source it was derived. The investigation revealed that it was the self-denying gift of a poor colored domestic, who was giving twenty dollars a year from her earnings of one dollar a week. God will not fail to make our smallest gifts to him efficient if we give with a desire for his glory.

If every one would give, the amount of funds bestowed upon charitable objects would be greatly enlarged. The contributions of the Church are not now equal to the

demand for the conversion of the world. This is a fact too evident to require proof. Why is it so? Is there not sufficient wealth in the hands of the professed followers of the Saviour to meet the exigencies of his kingdom? There is more than sufficient. Why, then, does the Church fail to obtain it? Partly because those who do give do not give that proportion that God requires, and partly because so small a number of those who are able to give, give anything at all. This may be illustrated by an appeal to the statistics of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Missionary cause is deservedly the most popular of all her benevolent enterprises. The membership of the Church may be stated, in round numbers, at seven hundred and fifty thousand. The sum which the missionary committee ask the membership to contribute for the year 1856, is two hundred and sixty thousand dollars; not that a larger sum could not be profitably expended, but, guided by the contributions of the previous year, they dare not anticipate a larger sum. This, apportioned among the whole membership, would be less than *thirty-five* cents a member. For what purpose is this asked? To convert the world

to God! Are there not three thousand persons in our Church who could give the whole amount without practicing either economy or self-denial? It is impossible to tell *how many* give; but the statistics prepared in some of the conferences will furnish us some important information, although we cannot accurately determine the question.

We will turn, then, to one of the richest conferences in the United States. The average amount per member contributed for missionary purposes was less than thirty-five cents. The largest average amount contributed by any charge was one dollar per member: to accomplish this the greatest possible exertion was made. The smallest average amount came from a circuit of two hundred and fifty-one members, who gave twenty-four dollars and fifty cents—*less than ten cents a member*. Taking a circuit from which a detailed report of the missionary collections is presented, giving the name of each contributor, with the amount individually contributed, we find the following results. The circuit, be it remembered, is one of the best in the conference. The average amount contributed per member is nearly sixty-two cents. More than one-third of the whole amount was contributed by less than one-

twentieth of the members. *The whole number that contributed were but two more than one-half the members.* Yet this was on a circuit where the average contribution was nearly double that of the Church at large. Nor should it be forgotten that it was a year of more than usual activity in the missionary collections. On this same circuit the amount reported was an increase of more than fifty per cent. on the previous year.

This detailed investigation is not designed to place our charitable contributions in the poorest possible light, but rather under favorable circumstances. The fact is too plain to be contradicted : more than half of the membership in many parts of the Church give nothing at all for our missionary operations ; and, we may presume, contribute for no religious purpose, except for the regular ministry—and not largely for that. The great deficiency, then, in our system—if we can be said to have any system at all—is, that only a small part of the members contribute. There is a fearful delinquency in this respect. What would be thought of a society of Christians in which half or more of the membership thought themselves too ignorant to pray, and so laid aside this exercise ? We shall lack the highest spiritual

attainments, as well as the necessary funds for benevolent purposes, until *every one* adopts the rule to give as God prospers him.

But we have already several times hinted that the collection for charity was but a secondary object of the apostle. His great design was to give the largest possible scope for the healthy exercise of the benevolent affections. The design of our Father in heaven in requiring us to be charitable, can only be interpreted as a wise arrangement to enable us to become more like himself. We have noticed, in a former chapter, that God is not dependent upon us to supply the wants of the poor. He could have made all equally rich, or made the earth so rich in all the necessities of life that none should want. So he has provided, in the wondrous plan of salvation, a scheme by which the poor may be enriched by the gifts of the rich, and at the same time make it a blessing to the giver, as it calls into exercise the best feelings of his renewed nature. This view of the invaluable effects of beneficence may not be apparent to some at first sight, but there can be no doubt of its correctness. The command to exercise benevolence must be considered as providing for us a *means*

*of grace*, and, therefore, is to be observed by all. That no one may be excluded, or lack an inducement to perform what has been commanded, Christ places himself in the position of the poor, and accepts even a cup of cold water, if it be given in the true spirit of benevolence. Benevolence, systematically and lovingly performed, is the divine antidote to covetousness; from which we may not hope to be freed until we understand the value of giving, and practice it cheerfully in our daily life.

4. *To give completeness to the plan of the apostle, there is set apart a stated time for the collection of this fund, which also identifies it with our regular religious observances.*

This is done by the command, "*Upon the first day of the week.*" The appointment of a particular day on which the obligations we are under to provide for our beneficence may be complied with, is designed to guard against the desultory habits characteristic of our present operations. The lack of system on this point is one of the most glaring faults of our present religious financial policy.

The command to set apart as God has prospered us, on the *first day of the week*, does not need to be so strictly interpreted or



enjoined as to interfere with any arrangements of ordinary business; and none will desire so to construe it, except, perhaps, those who would strive to make it appear impossible for them to come under the plan, and thus strive to free themselves from the obligation to give. All rules of this kind readily admit such modifications in their details as are necessary for individual application, so long as the spirit of the rule is not infringed. Thus the law to consecrate the Sabbath, doing no work therein, allows deeds of mercy and charity. The design of the command is to provide a *stated time* when we shall set apart a portion of our income to be used, as occasion may require, in beneficence. We should observe even the minutest detail, as far as our business affairs will permit; and every one who can know at the end of each week what his income has been during that period of time, should lay aside in store the proper proportion.

A very large class can do this weekly, in strict accordance with the letter of the command. All day-laborers, or those who are hired by the week, month, or year, or whose work is of that kind that they receive their wages on Saturday night, can meet the requirements of the rule with the greatest ease.



The example already given of the shoemaker in New-Jersey may be followed by such persons without hinderance. The following plan was adopted by an intelligent Christian who was determined to follow the rule as literally as his business would permit: "At the time of his private devotion on Saturday evening he sets apart from the receipts of the week a portion for his charity-fund; or if at any time he has not the money, he credits the sum on a benevolent account. As calls are presented he draws from this fund; and if at any time an urgent call requires more than he has thus set apart, he charges the ballance on his benevolent account, to be replaced from future incomes." An *effort* should be made to comply with the rule to the very letter; for the oftener we have the subject before us the greater will be our spiritual benefit. It should be remembered that one great end in view is to engage the constant recognition of the claims of the Saviour, and the regular exercise of the heart; this can be best secured by setting apart often, until such a habit is induced that we cannot well free our minds from the duty under any pressure of ordinary cares.

Those who cannot so arrange their busi-

ness as to arrive at a knowledge of their weekly gains may be able to sum them up *once a month*, and lay by in store as God hath prospered them during this period. There is, however, a liability to set apart a less sum than when it is done more frequently. But where there is a disposition to comply with the rule there will be no difficulty; for the largeness or smallness of the sum set aside is not to be so much taken into consideration as the proportion. It will be much better to be a little beyond than to fall short of it.

Others again may not be able to arrive at any correct account of their profits oftener than *once a year*. When this is a matter of necessity, and not of negligence or want of interest, it will meet the spirit of the rule. He is a poor business man who does not take an account of stock once a year at least, and determine the condition of his business. When this is done, let him lay by the proportion that the cause of benevolence may lawfully demand, and hold it sacred for this purpose. The yearly adjustment will often best meet the affairs of the *farmer*. It is best, however, when a longer period than once a week is adopted, to determine beforehand what the proportion shall be; for if the

heart is not under the holiest influences, success will be more apt to lessen the proportion than to enlarge it. The following plan, that of a clergyman, has many good features about it, and is according to the spirit of the rule. He says: "I have for many years had a fixed system of giving from one-fifth to a quarter of my income to religious and charitable purposes. I have laid out my plan at the beginning of the year, keeping a private account of all donations, and leaving nothing to mere accident or excited feeling at the moment. At the end of about thirty years, during which I have carried on this system, I find my property materially increased; and I am surprised to find, on looking over my accounts, how many hundreds of dollars I have thus been permitted to contribute to the cause."

Some may be engaged in such a business as will allow them to devote a certain proportion of *each gain* arising in their traffic. This has many advantages, for it is a continual reference to an acknowledgment that we are indebted to God for all our prosperity. It has been adopted by some with great benefit to themselves; but from the nature of the case, it must be of limited application.

A striking peculiarity of this rule yet re-

mains to be noticed. The setting apart of this fund for benevolent purposes is an appropriate work for the Sabbath. It is a very common occurrence to see persons grow indignant at the mere mention of money matters in the church on Sabbath, and to hear them talk with peculiar solemnity and earnestness of its impropriety, even calling it a degradation of the Sabbath. It is known that this class of persons are not famous for their liberality. There is nothing said in this rule regarding the propriety of such Sabbath collections ; but it certainly points out the correctness of taking into consideration our earthly prosperity, and setting aside the portion that should be sacred to the Lord. Many commentators are of the opinion that in this case it was designed to bring the portion to the church and deposit it in the treasury. The objection that is made to handling money on the Sabbath for charitable purposes is, however, entirely overthrown by the rule.

There seems to be a peculiar fitness in making the Sabbath the occasion on which we are to separate a portion of our prosperity for charitable and religious uses. The act is a recognition of the goodness of God toward us in our temporal affairs ; a fact that we

are too apt to forget. The Sabbath is for rest and devotion; when the mind, relieved from the ordinary round of toil and business, takes into solemn consideration its eternal interests. In a peculiar manner the goodness and mercy of our Father in heaven recurs to our minds. The privileges of the sanctuary and means of grace are forced upon our attention. We are carried back by the services to the sublime spectacle of the Saviour's life and death. The rich and the poor meet together, sharing equal privileges, and the truth of common interest and fellowship sinks silently into the heart. Could there be a more opportune moment to ask ourselves, "How much owest thou thy Lord?" The bands of a worldly selfishness are loosened or removed, and the just claims of God and humanity are met, our own souls are watered from on high, and fresh strength is imparted that we may go on our way rejoicing. If we believe, as we ought, that alms-giving is a duty no less than prayer and praise, we should be thankful in our hearts that God has in this gracious manner connected it with our Sabbath joys.

It would be happy for us if we could aid some good cause or poor person every day, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.

How erroneous, then, is that common remark that we are called upon too often for charitable purposes. If we provide our fund as here directed, and give with intelligence and equity, these calls cannot come too frequently, for we will have a little for each. We are not to concentrate all our charity upon one object, however worthy it may be, but give to each in that proportion which will enable us to assist in all.

We have now presented an exposition of this divine rule of Christian Beneficence, imperfectly it may be, but we trust in such a manner as not only to win your admiration in contemplating the divine wisdom contained in it, but also your consent to its obligations as an important duty and means of grace. You must have observed as we proceeded, that it is founded upon the same principles that form the substratum of the Jewish rules examined in the third chapter. You may see in this, as in that, the design of Heaven for the welfare of the soul. The Saviour would preserve you blameless here, and prepare you for the enjoyment of a better life beyond the grave. He would throw the broad shield of his grace between you and the world that is apt to engage your attention, and peril your

soul. It is not a burden to make your journey wearisome, but a rich provision of manna to strengthen you on your way to your eternal home.

The observance of this rule would possibly cause a great change in the manner of your spiritual life; but would it not be a happy change? You cannot say that it is not practicable, for we have shown that where it cannot be kept in the letter it may in the spirit. Fail not to take the subject with you into your closet, and on your knees before the throne of grace decide, and we have no fear. You will consecrate yourselves and all you have to His service. You will come forth with new and holy aims, and a serene joy in your heart. Remember the day of your adoption into the family of God. Trace his mercies to the present hour. Then ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?"



## CHAPTER VI.

THE BENEFITS THAT WOULD FLOW TO THE  
CHURCH FROM THE ADOPTION OF THIS RULE.

It is always presumed that the Christian loves the Church, and is willing to undergo labor and practice self-denial for her prosperity. How could it be otherwise? Recollections of the happiness he has enjoyed in her services force upon him the words of the psalmist: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" But he sees in the Church far more than a source of joy and refuge for his own spirit; it is the visible regenerative power of the earth. All that is great and good in modern times has proceeded from her wondrous life; beyond her pale are ignorance, misery, and desolation. He sees in the Church the great element of human progress, and knows that the hopes of humanity are bound up in her extension. Knowing that the design of God is no less than the redemption of the world, using the Church as the visible means, he at once realizes that her only proper character is aggressive, occupying the ground from



one outpost to another until the world shall be filled with his glory. Yet a hasty glance at the manner in which she has fulfilled this her true aggressive character, leads him to confess that it has not been proportionate to her lofty aims, or to the commands of her Master.

It is true he sees in this period of her history an activity far in advance of former years. Her missionaries are planting the standard of the cross in but newly-discovered lands; her Bibles are multiplied like the sands on the sea-shore; her colporteurs are finding the paths that lead to neighborhoods unvisited by ordinary means of grace; her Sabbath schools are molding the minds of millions of the young; but when his eye wanders over the vast concourse of the earth's people, he is led to exclaim, "What are these among so many!" The conviction forces itself upon his mind that the Church is not acting up to the demands of the age. Yet she is the only hope of the age. The people are wounded on account of their transgressions, and she alone has the balm for their cure. They are thirsting for the waters of life that flow only through her channels. In the midst of their agony they cry, "Come over and help us!" We look

about and inquire, "Who will go?" One comes forward whose soul is imbued with a holy zeal to save souls; he says, "Send me." The means are sought to provide for him in his mission; they come reluctantly, or entirely fail. Our eyes wander again across the blue ocean, and the people stand pale, emaciated, perishing for lack of the bread of life. We look to heaven, and from its stillness a beseeching voice pleads, "Go ye, therefore, into all the world."

The design of the Church is to *evangelize* the world. No one can read his Bible and come to any other conclusion. The lands that have never heard the name of Jesus are to become vocal with his praise. The isles of the sea are to echo back the joyful strains of the continent. The poor and outcast of our Christian lands are to be brought into the service of the Lord. It is a great work, you say; yes, the design was heaven-born, and shows the amplitude of infinite love and compassion. But you cannot doubt that the Church is able to accomplish it if she would use all her capacities, under the direction of the word and the Spirit. Let us examine this work a little more carefully; for perhaps nothing can so well present to us the duty of the Church as an in-

telligent apprehension of the demands of the world upon her aid.

In looking at the religious condition of men, the most important fact which strikes the eye of every observer, is, that the false religions of the world are tottering with age, and are about to fall in pieces and crumble into dust. There is no form of false religion in the earth that is as strong now, or capable of exerting as much influence, as in some former time in their history. The better acquaintance we have formed with the nations has assured us that these ancient faiths have no life, and are rapidly relaxing their hold on the masses of the people. They have been condemned long since by the intelligent, except so far as their connection with the state has made them a source of power for the accomplishment of personal aggrandizement or ambition. These forms of error are imbecile, and were it not for the protecting hand of the state had long since fallen. The result of a religious revolution in these lands would be atheism, or some form of the supernatural, which, as far as it affected the soul, would be no better. We cannot hope that a revolution would be of any profit to them, unless as the bands of false religion are

broken, Christianity can be present with her missionaries, and Bibles, and tracts, to give a good direction to their newly-acquired freedom. May we not believe that God in infinite mercy is permitting things to remain as they are, until the Church is ready to do her duty in providing means to evangelize the world? Without much greater liberality, she is certainly unprepared for the immediate execution of her mission.

This inquiry is sufficiently interesting to be pursued with greater minuteness. Many of the nations have but few and faint traces of civilization; and when in this condition we might expect their superstitions to yield immediately, and take the form of the religion of those from whom they receive their civilization. They have never felt the force of fanaticism. They cling to the forms of religion which they possess, partly because they came from their fathers, and partly because they have never seen or known any thing better. It is a decayed and withered relic of no real value, which they would readily exchange for a religion of life and power.

Elevated above these, China attracts our attention. Religion with this people is a name, not a living power. There is no in-

telligence in the strange superstitions of this people ; and, what is still stranger, they are as wanting in passion and feeling as in mind. Their form of religion could not exist without the present form of government, and while we are writing that seems to be passing away. The great revolution now shaking that empire from center to circumference, is casting the idols to the bats and the moles, and proposes to install in their place what they intend for Christianity. If they succeed, what a work opens to the Church. Four hundred millions of immortal souls asking for the bread of life, and to be shown the way to heaven.

India, with her Brahmins, like so many enchanters holding the people in awe, is, perhaps, less vulnerable than any other stronghold of heathendom. But even here the preaching of the cross has been the "power of God unto salvation." There is hope for India, for the power of her formal devotions is growing less every day, as they are brought into comparison with the religion of Christ and the civilization of modern Europe. It was in these lands that the modern missionaries first planted their standards, placing them in a position in which, if they triumphed, it might be proof that

there was no danger of failure in any other direction.

Look at Mohammedanism. The empire in which it reigns bears all the marks of a speedy decay, and nothing better can be said of its faith. It has long ceased to be aggressive, and has been encroached upon in more than one direction. The wise men of the nation are compelled to see that the religion of Christ is superior to that of Mohammed, and they have lost all confidence in its power to arouse the nation to life. The concessions that have been made to Christians, especially during the progress of the war, indicate that the day dawns in which we shall have set before us an open door. We must prepare to enter it.

The next step brings us into the presence of that baleful superstition that has been engendered and nurtured in the very heart of Christianity—Romanism. But if the day of her glory has not departed, and the vanity and decrepitude of second childhood is not settling down upon her, then we have no clues by which to trace the labyrinthian march of history. Her power has been waning for these two hundred years so palpably, that none, except herself, has the hardihood to deny it. The coldness of death has long

since come upon her extremities, and cannot be much longer kept from her heart. The power that ruled the nations has become too abject to claim the respect of her children, and seeks foreign aid to gain a night's security.

Had we space to examine more particularly into the condition of these nations, the facts would stand out in bolder relief. It has been said by a writer now living, "No such singular conjuncture of symptoms throughout the world has ever before invited the activity and zeal of Christians. And if the pressure of responsibility is at all times great upon them, in this behalf it has acquired a treble might, inasmuch as it seems that the antagonistic powers are fast drawing off from the field. Looking out to the long and many-colored array of ghostly domination, which stretches its lines across plains and hills, we discern movement; but it is the stir of retreat: encampments are breaking up, barriers are trampled upon, standards are furled, the clarion of dismay is sounded. This, this, then, is the hour for the hosts of the Lord to snatch their weapons and be up!"

May we not inquire, How stands the Church while these auspicious signals loom



up in the distance? What preparation has she made, and is she now making, to go in and possess the land from which God is driving out the enemy from his strongholds?

Commerce has found, or will find in a few years, her way to all the nations of the earth, and has thus indicated the way and provided conveyance for the missionary of the cross. The improvements in ship-building, and the application of steam-power to vessels, have made the pilgrimage of years a pleasure-journey for the summer months. The invention of printing, and the improvements made in presses in the few past years, enable us to issue religious books with such rapidity and cheapness, that it is now possible to supply every family of the earth. God has shown the vein in which the silver and the gold has been hid for ages from the eyes of those who loved him not, and poured it into the lap of Christian nations. The Church has not been negligent of God's goodness; but she has not made that consecration which the peculiar state of the world demands. We have organized missionary societies, and sent out men to preach the everlasting Gospel; but what are this handful of men for the millions in ignorance of the true God? The Bible societies have



multiplied Bibles; but are not thousands, even in our own land, famishing for the bread of life? The tract societies have scattered the writings of holy men; but how few have seen the colporteur in his mission of love. The Church has made an important step in progress, in acknowledging that she is not doing enough. But why is not greater progress made? Because she has not returned to the primitive mode in providing for her charities and duties. She has, indeed, gained vision to see, written in burning words, the command to preach the Gospel to all nations; but so far, at least, has failed to revive the only system by which she can provide for the work.

We need men and money. We have no doubt that men can be found when the means are sure to be provided to send them out and sustain them in their labors. Let the Church give unmistakable signs that she is in earnest, and men, who count not their lives dear for the sake of the Gospel, will be found in abundance. What we need above all things at this moment, is the adoption of the Christian rule of systematic beneficence by every member of the Church, and the work of salvation would go forward.

It would increase the amount of means at

the disposal of the Church, by securing a larger number of contributors. This would lead them to more activity and interest in their Church relations; it would insure the prayers of the members in behalf of her benevolent designs, and thus lead to spirituality of life. Unity of faith is often produced by union of effort. The amounts received by our benevolent organizations fall far short of what they could profitably expend. There is scarcely a missionary station that would not be benefited by an increase of laborers and larger means. Many new stations would be established where the hand of Providence indicates good prospect of success. Bibles could be distributed in much greater numbers without giving too many to the people. Who does not know that there is not a denomination whose contributions are sufficient to enable them to occupy all the field opening before them. Nor will the amount be sufficient until all give, and give in liberal proportion to their prosperity. The rule observed would not only secure a greater number of contributors, but more than double the amount from those who now give.

It would give a *steady flow to the charities of the Church*, and in this particular greatly

increase her efficiency. So long as our gatherings are from impulse, rather than by a settled rule taken from the Scriptures, we cannot expect great success. How often do the directors of our benevolent societies make appropriations with trembling. They find the treasury empty; but a call comes, so urgent that it seems impossible to refuse, and they borrow to supply the present necessity, yet with doubts as to the probability of meeting the loan from the coming contributions. How often, when they are making appropriations for the coming year, are they compelled to make the sums less than the exigencies of the Church demand. This is a source of continual anxiety to the directors. But all this would pass away with the adoption of the Gospel system. Let every Christian give as God requires, and they could trust in the great Ruler of the universe to provide the means to carry on his work. The funds would continually flow into the Church from all directions, and every claim would be met with rejoicing. No system of finance adopted to supply a national treasury would be productive of equal advantages, for it is devised by a power and wisdom that man has never reached.

*System in beneficence would place the Church before the world in her true character.* The world does not—cannot—doubt the correctness and superiority of the Christian faith, and but little fault can be found with her Church organizations. What the world wants is a higher life in the Church—a deeper consecration to the cause of religion. In too many instances the practice is not equal to the profession. Especially does the world see a wide difference between the benevolence taught in the Bible and that practiced in the Church. How often has it been said, “If you think that all men will be lost who are not saved through a knowledge of Christ, why do you not make greater efforts for the cause of salvation? Why not send crowds of missionaries to every land? Why not print thousands of Bibles where you now print dozens? The members of the Church certainly have abundant means.” There is some truth in the taunt, although it is not uttered in the right spirit. Yet we are compelled to confess that many claim to live for Christ who do little or nothing for his cause. The Bible says it is more blessed to give than to receive, yet many seem intent to give the smallest possible sum. How different all this would be under the system we advocate.

Could every follower of Christ be seen taking a careful inventory of his property, and appropriating all the proceeds not necessary for his own wants to send the Bible to the ignorant, food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, the messenger of mercy to the sick and imprisoned, there would indeed be an argument for the divinity of the religion of Christ invulnerable to the assaults of men or devils. This is just the proof that is needed above all others in this age of the world.

It follows from the above, that the adoption of this system would lead the Church to a holier life. Her latent power would be developed, and her progress evident to all beholders. The exercise of benevolence would lead to the growth of all those graces and virtues which are at once the proof and beauty of the new life. It may well be doubted if the highest spiritual attainments are possible without a careful cultivation of this *grace*. But this would, of necessity, lead to spiritual advancement; for giving would lead to praying, praying in return to self-denial, that we might give more, having learned the blessedness of giving. It is the consecration of all we have, and are, and hope to be, to the cause of Christ that brings us into

the most intimate covenant relations with him, and places us under his care and keeping. Would it not promote our communion with God, to so admit him into all our worldly affairs as to consult him in all we do? Would it not have a holy, tranquilizing effect on our souls, to be assured that we were doing his will? We should certainly thus find ourselves living in a purer atmosphere.

The Church would be enabled to enter every avenue of usefulness, and make her presence felt in all grades of society. There is no human being who is not worthy the effort to save him. Yet how many is the Church, in her seeming poverty, compelled to pass by. There is yet a great work for Christianity, upon which she entered, as it were, but yesterday. We mean a work among the streets and alleys, in the hovels and cellars. She needs stout-hearted divers, to go down into the depths of crime and pollution and bring up precious immortal souls. Such a work is impossible as long as we move along in our present style. The elements of piety are among us, but they are comparatively inactive. How shall they be put in operation? You say, By the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. But may we ex-

pect this baptism before we prepare the way?  
 “Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing; that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Do not spiritualize this passage, as the custom is, so as to take away its force. It means just what it says. There have been withholden from God his just and established claims upon our temporal prosperity, and when we return in sincerity of heart to the Gospel measure and manner of giving, we may expect a revival of his work that will shake the earth.

It has been the reproach hurled at us by infidelity for these many years, that the Church has not proper sympathy with the lower classes—that we have not paid them the attention that they may lawfully claim from a body whose example is the Saviour of men. True, indeed, they do not cast the reproach at us because they are more benevolent at heart, but it is the most forcible argument they can wield. This reproach may be done away. Let the membership provide the means, by an adoption of this system, and it will be seen that the Church is true to the



mission given her. The devoted labors of her Head will be reproduced in every street, and alley, and lane, and highway. The poor and unfortunate will have the Gospel preached to them, and their dwellings be filled with songs of praise instead of bacchanalian revels and blasphemies. The labors already given in this direction have been abundantly blessed of God. They come within the province of those engaged in saving souls.

This system, we candidly believe, would greatly aid the Church in preparing for that final contest with infidelity and heathenism which lies in her pathway in the subjugation of this world to Christ. That a period of enlarged liberality shall come, ushering in the glorious triumph of the Saviour's kingdom, our Bibles plainly tell us. No form of covetousness will be found in the latter-day glory. The wealth of the world is yet to be brought and laid upon the altar of the Church, for men will learn that its best use is in the service of God. We hope our eyes may see the day when *every one* will give, not what he can conveniently spare, but all that can be devoted to this purpose by strict economy and self-denial. "Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant



unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in the former years." Hear the word of prophecy. "The merchandise of Tyre shall be holiness to the Lord; it shall not be treasured nor laid up." "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE PERSONAL BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM  
THE ADOPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF  
SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

THIS view of the subject has been frequently remarked upon in the body of the essay, and presupposed in the whole exposition and argument. Yet it may be considered particularly, in relation to its temporal as well as spiritual advantages. God has so interwoven command and reward, duty and blessing, that it will not be improper to inquire what benefit may be personally gained by adopting this system as our guide in matters relating to property and income.

The adoption of this system would lead to the highest degree of temporal prosperity. This statement has already been noticed as a well-defined doctrine of the Bible. Giving to charitable and religious objects does not cause us to lack the necessities of life, for God has promised to repay with his own bountiful hand. Many have continued poor all their days, because they failed to make a right use of the property committed to their

care—appropriating to themselves the portion belonging to God. If we have been unfaithful in comparative poverty, how can we expect to have riches intrusted to us? We complain that we have not been prospered as others. Has it not been because we were unfaithful stewards?

*This system develops habits of economy and industry in the business and laboring man.* When we engage in any enterprise, our success depends greatly upon the degree in which it can concentrate all our energies. The whole soul cannot be interested without we have before us a lofty purpose—an aim worthy our immortal natures. Then we can command industry, for it is a delight; we can devise a practical system, for the desire of present success yields to the grander purpose of a final triumph; we can practice economy, for the end to be accomplished is worthy the keenest self-denial. What is the end of your business now? To gather wealth to gratify your bodily desires, to have a name among the influential, or, it may be, simply because it has been the habit of your life. You have been often compelled to exclaim, It is a hard lot, and sigh for a relief from it. Why? Because a suspicion crosses your mind that the labor will not be recompensed by

the end obtained. But how different would be your feelings had you the assurance that your daily labor was for God, and recorded on high. The knowledge that you were aiding by your liberality to rescue a world from sin would make toil sweet. It would enlarge your soul. You would find it expanding your faculties, concentrating your powers, directing your energies, and leading to certain success. In the midst of earth's toil, how sweet would be the anticipation of that rest which remains for God's people. You would appreciate the truth of the apostle's saying: "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

*Systematic beneficence would give you character in the business world.* There is no greater error than that which underlies the often insinuated objection against religion, that the effort to combine religion and business is fatal to the latter. If it were required to substantiate such an atheistic sentiment by an appeal to facts, its falsity would be readily detected and exposed. If men have confidence in your religious profession, they will pay due deference to it; and if they have confidence in your business capacity, they will select you to transact their business in preference to others,—that is, if they wish

it done honestly. They have more confidence in that man who does all things for the glory of God than in the one who has no other end in view than his own emolument. In no other manner can you so successfully convince men of your Christian character, as by a practical and continual acknowledgment of God in your business. It is a phase of Christianity which will gain their entire confidence. Suppose the employer of a day-laborer knew that a portion of his well-earned remuneration was each day or week set apart for charitable and religious uses, would it induce the employer, even if an Infidel or Atheist, to reduce his wages? Would it not rather waken conviction in his heart that religion was a reality.

If the principles and practice of beneficence, as taught in the Bible, were made as much a part of Christian practice as prayer, we have no doubt there would be such a flow of wealth to the Church as would astonish the world. The fact that prosperity attends beneficence has been so much disregarded that it has almost ceased to be a matter of faith, but this does not disprove its truth. Look about you, and single out the man, if you can, who has practiced a liberal and intelligent distribution of his means in

charity, and show it to have been a disadvantage to him. Take the testimony of those who have done so; does it not all tend to establish the truth of God's word in this respect? Let it not be condemned till you have made the trial yourself. Put it to the test which the Saviour authorized: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself."

But these are *minor advantages* in comparison with the great end which we would keep in view. Your growth in grace depends upon the adoption of systematic beneficence. Would you advance steadily as a Christian? unite giving to praying, and your desire will not fail of gratification. "Deal thy bread to the hungry; bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the poor naked cover him. . . Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy re-reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."

The highest possible happiness to be obtained in this world, is to be assured that we are accepted of God through Christ, and that

we are coöperating with our Master in saving souls. When we know that we are employed in this service, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, we can look to the future without fear. There have been many persons who, as they looked upon the perils of trade, have come to the conclusion, for a time, that great progress in the divine life was not possible to those engaged in ordinary traffic. This was at one time the opinion of Normand Smith, and he disengaged himself from business; but a better study of the Scriptures taught him that his business could be conducted in the fear of God. He adopted a noble scheme of beneficence, allowing it to keep pace with his business, and the result was not only an intimate communion with God, but unparalleled prosperity in temporal things. One who has practically proven this says, "This system has been of great advantage to me, enabling me to feel that my life is directly employed for God. It has tended to increase my faith, and led me to look forward with greater joy toward my heavenly home. It has afforded me great happiness in enabling me to portion out the Lord's money, and has enlisted my mind more in the progress of Christ's cause. Happy priv-



ilege, which the humblest may enjoy, of thus associating the common labors of life with the grateful service of the Saviour, and making that which naturally leads the heart from God, subserve the highest spiritual good."

The angel said to Cornelius, "*Thy prayers and thy alms* are come up for a memorial before God." The conjunction of praying and giving has ever been a marked characteristic of the most eminent servants of Christ. How could it be otherwise? Nor must it be overlooked, that the concurrent testimony of *all* those who have devised liberal plans of giving, establishes the fact of a decided growth in grace. Have you seen others outstrip you in the Gospel race while you seemed to be making an effort equal to theirs? Examine carefully into it, and see if their constant giving will not solve the problem.

#### CONCLUSION.

WE have now examined, according to the plan proposed at the beginning, the teachings of the Bible in relation to the right use of property, and urged upon you the acceptance of the Bible system; we shall be happy indeed if we have convinced you that sys-



tematic beneficence is plainly taught in the Scriptures, and still more happy if you have consented, in the fear of God, to adopt the system set forth.

The whole argument from the Bible is comprised in the following propositions:—

1. Property is the gift of God; not essential to secure the favor of God or worldly happiness, but placed in our hands as stewards, to be used for his glory, as a powerful instrument in promoting the temporal and spiritual advantage of mankind.

2. Beneficence has been commanded, not only to carry out the great scheme of Christianizing the world, and supplying the wants of the poor and unfortunate, but also as a healthy and necessary exercise and discipline for the religious affections, and essential to the highest development of the spiritual life.

3. To give practical efficiency and secure perpetuity to these designs, God has arranged and commanded them in a simple and comprehensive system.

4. This system obligates every Christian to provide a charitable fund, derived from free-will offering, set apart at stated times, in proportion as God has given prosperity, that it may meet all proper calls for charity or benevolence.

In addition to this argument, drawn directly from the Bible, we have considered that the adoption of this system would—

1. *Benefit the Christian Church*, in supplying means to meet her demands for the evangelization of the world, and permitting her to accomplish the benevolent designs for which she was established.

2. *Benefit the members of the Church personally* in providing an antidote to covetousness, and securing for them the largest temporal and spiritual prosperity.

If these propositions and arguments are well founded, they deserve your careful consideration and cheerful acquiescence. But how different is this system from the general practice of the Church. And we may remark also, how delinquent are Christians in the neglect of such a benevolence as the word of God warrants and commands. But we believe a brighter day is dawning upon the Church; that she is about to return to the practice of that beneficence which was once a part of her glory. If such a reform is effected, then may the best hopes of her sons and daughters be realized. The revival of the missionary spirit has quickened her pulsations; it needs but the revival of systematic beneficence to send the blood to the far-

the extremities. God hasten the day ! Is not this the response of every Christian heart ? The advent of this period depends to some extent upon your individual efforts. Adopt the system yourself. Recommend it to your friends and brethren in the Church. Test its heavenly virtues, and then spread abroad its praises. Do you hesitate to adopt so plain a rule—one that would so benefit the Church and yourself ? Search your heart, and see if there is not remaining a portion of covetousness. Remember *who* commands it—whose name it would glorify.

Sit down, then, without delay, and make a careful and conscientious computation of the sums necessary to support and educate your family in a comfortable but economical manner ; add to this the necessary increase that should be made to your capital, for economical business purposes, and then sacredly devote the remainder to purposes of benevolence. Determine that you will not let your capital exceed a specified sum, which should not be more than a comfortable provision for your family in case of your decease. As your capital increases, give annually a larger per cent. of its increase ; and when it has reached the sum determined upon, give away all your in-

crease, except what is actually necessary for the expenses of your family. This may cost great self-denial at first; but soon the blessedness of giving, expelling the last remains of covetousness from the heart, will yield a happiness beyond any other disposition you could make of your property.

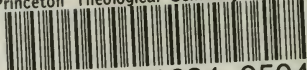
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